Strong Arms and Drinking Strength

MASCULINITY, VIOLENCE, AND THE BODY IN ANCIENT INDIA

JARROD L. WHITAKER

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To Nicole, for making me listen.
To Gabriel and Maya, for allowing me to see.

It's not about whose facts are true.
It's about whose fabrication of history and
culture has the most consensus.

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Let me make a brief comment on translating the *Ṛgveda*. This is a very difficult text to translate and understand on so many levels, and final responsibility for all translations is my own. I have cross-checked every stanza with all the usual sources (Geldner, Grassmann, Mayrhofer, Oldenberg, Wackernagel, etc.) and I have been vigilant in noting particularly problematic issues. I extend a special thanks to Joel Brereton and Stephanie Jamison collectively, as they graciously provided me with a draft version of their forthcoming translation of the *Ṛgveda* in 2003. Even in this preliminary form, it has been an invaluable and comprehensive source for mining the text and mitigating its difficulties. Its publication is eagerly anticipated as it will surely open up the text, and indeed early Vedic scholarship, to the English-speaking world.

Introduction

Successive waves of pastoralist tribes calling themselves "Āryans" (*árya-*) and speaking an archaic form of the Indo-European language Sanskrit migrated from Central Asia and settled around 2000–1200 BCE in the fertile Punjab and its surroundings (modern northwest Pakistan and India).[1] The term *árya* expresses a cultural, rather than racial, designation for groups of people who maintained distinct social and ritual identities.[2] By 1200–800 BCE, highly trained poet-priests belonging to the later waves of migration codified Āryan social and ritual customs in a corpus of four oral texts known as the *Vedas*. The oldest text, the *Ṛgveda* (ca. 1500–1200 BCE), is our almost exclusive source for understanding life in the earliest period of Vedic culture. It contains more than a thousand poetic hymns to primarily three gods: the deified ritual Fire, Agni; the war god, Indra; and Soma, who is none other than the personification of the sacred beverage *sóma*. These liturgies were performed at the turn of the New Year in daylong fire rituals, in which poet-priests prepared the divine draught to empower Indra. After strengthening their war god, ritual practitioners direct Indra to conquer the universe and to conduct cattle raids and open warfare for profit.

The dominant image of Indra is that of a highly glamorized, violent, and powerful Āryan male. He is the paradigmatic man, and the ritual poetry indicates that he, Agni, and Soma, as well as Indra's divine warrior troop, the Maruts, are exemplary role models for human men. Indeed, the language that characterizes these gods

contains a rich vocabulary for men and manly ideals. Two common terms, *nár* and *vīrá*, denote "man" in the *Ṛgveda*, and the corresponding abstract nouns *nṛmṇá* and *vīryà*, as well as *paúṃsya*, signify the ideals of manhood.[3] This androcentric lexicon defines males, whether divine or human, in terms of their economic standing, ritual participation, and martial prowess. Poets also glorify men who embody specialized male roles (*śū́ra*, *rā́jan*) and praise their skill in horse and chariot combat, which the Āryan tribes introduced into the Indian subcontinent. In addition, the male body is overtly lionized, especially its physical strength.

The poets frequently speak of violent conflicts and volatile political environments. Warfare and shifting alliances appear to have marked the successive waves of migration, and the Ṛgvedic hymns indicate that the tribes seek to unite under a powerful chieftain or sovereign ruler.[4] The tribes also struggled with one another and with indigenous peoples, whom they ostracize—ritually, poetically, and martially—as the enemy other; that is, as snakes or literally "obstacles, ensnarers" (*vṛtrá-*) and "barbarians" (*dā́sa-*, *dásyu-*).[5] The text does not indicate that the tribes were concerned with the permanent control of territory or state formation, though these become post-Ṛgvedic concerns. Conflict appears to have occurred because of the pressures of seasonal migrations. The need for food and water led to cattle raiding and competition for natural resources (such as access to grazing grounds and waterways), which escalated into open warfare and claims to chieftainship and sovereignty.[6] While they do not represent the only values of Āryan men, migratory conquest, martial expertise, and manliness are dominant motifs in the *Ṛgveda*, and seasonal skirmishes and open warfare are central to the ideology and life of Ṛgvedic poet-priests and their clientele, namely, the male heads of households and clans, wealthy patrons and ritual sacrificers, and warriors and chieftains. Hence, masculine ideals and martial practices play a crucial role in the lives of those who participated in Ṛgvedic ritual culture.

Although the text is replete with images of Indra's hypermasculine nature and martial deeds, there is not a single focused study on the relationship between the performance of early Vedic rituals and Ṛgvedic mythology and the complex ways in which such practices and discourse interact to construct and legitimize the masculine identities of Āryan men. In fact, past scholarship has failed to assess the way in which early Vedic ritual performances and discourse consistently construct a worldview in which conflict and competition are central ideals not only for men who conduct cattle raids and war, but also for men who sing hymns and perform the rites. As such, Ṛgvedic rituals play a direct role in constructing a form of masculinity that defines a man in terms of physical and liturgical power, domination, and violence. To address these concerns,

this book considers the ritualized poetic construction of male identity in the *Ṛgveda* and argues that an important aspect of early Vedic life involves the sustained promotion and embodiment of what it means to be a true man. A close examination of the construction of masculinity will also yield insights into some of the social and political functions of early Vedic rituals and the status and realities of those who perform and participate in them. As we will see, Ṛgvedic ritual rhetoric and practices encode specific male roles, especially the role of man as warrior, while embedding these roles in a complex network of social, economic, and political relationships. Ritual practitioners reproduce masculine and martial ideals, first, to create an image of their community and its members as virile, powerful, and unified; second, to socialize men within a patriarchal ritual tradition; and third, to negotiate and control economic and political realities and relationships. It is my contention that Ṛgvedic ritual practices and discursive formations play a central role in constructing a man's identity for various ends and in socializing men within a ritual tradition that values power, manliness, and dominance as a core part of its identity. The androcentric martial ideology that Ṛgvedic poet-priests propagate in *sóma* rituals also demands seasonal migrations and the control of natural resources and pastoral lands. This suggests that Ṛgvedic *sóma* rituals play a direct role in driving Āryan migratory expansionism into and across the northwest region of the subcontinent in the middle of the second millennium BCE.

The overall aim of this book is to consider in depth the ways in which Ṛgvedic ritual practitioners construct and legitimize a hegemonic form of masculinity and, more specifically, the way in which they communicate particular masculine and martial roles, identities, and relationships to early Vedic men in ritual performances. I argue that Ṛgvedic poet-priests employ various poetic and performative strategies, some explicit, others less so, to construct an androcentric ideology as normative, while justifying it as the most valid way to live. In this regard, I follow Bell's (1992: 192–193) definition of ideology "as a strategy of power, a process whereby certain social practices or institutions are depicted to be 'natural' and 'right.' . . . It is a strategy intimately connected with legitimation, discourse, and fairly high degrees of social complicity and maneuverability."[7] In these terms, ideology is not a fixed set of ideas conveyed by a monolithic social system and imposed on people who uncritically accept it. People do not passively acquire beliefs. They appropriate, negotiate, and qualify their inherited worldviews, and they consent, resist, or manipulate aspects of dominant ideologies to benefit from their strategic posturing and assent. As we will see, the Ṛgvedic construction of masculinity is embedded within a complex network of discursive formations and institutionalized power relations that Āryan men propagate, embody, and perform in response to ritually defined

social pressures, economic realities, and political structures. In other words, the Ṛgvedic tradition grounds power in certain forms of behavior; in circumscribed conceptualizations and uses of bodies; and in specific hierarchical relationships. This book explores various ways in which Ṛgvedic poet-priests produce and justify their institutionalized androcentric ideology in ritual performances; how they define and enforce social relationships and masculine practices, especially the patriarchal sociopolitical order; how they maintain their own positions of power and wealth; and ultimately how they reproduce their ritual tradition.[8]

The *Ṛgveda*

As a closed "canonized" text, the *Ṛgveda Saṃhitā* ("Collection of Knowledge of Stanzas") contains 1,028 hymns dispersed across 10 books or *maṇḍala-* ("cycles"). It reached its final form after a long period of oral transmission from father to son, teacher to student. Scholars agree in principle that the inner, six "family books" 2–7 represent the oldest portion of the text (each book is ascribed to an individual clan or lineage of poets).[9] Yet within this core collection, books 4–6 represent the oldest layer, and books 2, 3, 7, and most of nonfamily book 8 point to a middle layer of development.[10] Books 1 and 10 represent the final layer of the text, with some hymns being added well into the post-Ṛgvedic Brāhmaṇical period (this is perhaps the case with the famous Puruṣasūkta hymn, ṚV.10.90). Book 9 represents a cross-section of all layers because it is a collection of specific hymns drawn primarily from poets of books 1, 5, and 8.[11] Its hymns are composed exclusively for the god Soma and the *sóma* plant itself as it is being pressed and its juices strained and purified. Any identification of textual layers is at best general since each book contains early and late hymns produced by several generations of poets within each clan, and even the final layer contains old material. Witzel (1997a: 263) suggests that the *Ṛgveda* represents a historical snapshot of perhaps five or six generations of poets and royal lineages. In addition, book 10 is an appendix of hymns from one or two generations of poets, who are most likely the students or sons and grandsons of the earliest poets. It is thus almost impossible to know the exact time frame that the designators "old, early," "middle," and "late, final" indicate, apart from a general gloss of somewhere between 200 and 500 years. For the purposes of this work, these temporal markers signal a heuristic genealogy of composition and transmission. Identifying the historical layers of the text proves to be invaluable for illustrating the way that ritual practitioners reproduce Ṛgvedic ideals and practices across the various strata, from the earliest to final layers, as

well as highlighting the way in which they transmit and legitimize their ritual tradition over time.

The bulk of the *Ṛgveda* attests a *sóma* sacrifice centered on Indra (what most likely is the precursor of the classical *Agniṣṭoma* ritual).[12] It is essentially a collection of hymns composed for the *sóma* rite in which Indra figured as the central deity. Indra's personality is complex, yet three overlapping myths stand out in the text and define his character. First, Indra props apart the world halves, Father Sky and Mother Earth, and subsequently sets the universe in order. Second, the war god battles the cosmic serpent Vṛtra to release primordial waters, especially in the form of spring floods and rain. Third, the war god smashes open a mountain cave (*valá*) to free the sun and stolen cattle (the two are metaphorically interchangeable).[13] As Kuiper (1983: 11–13) has pointed out, the nouns *vṛtrá* and *valá* both come from the same root √*vṛ*, which means "to block, obstruct, cover, enclose, encircle." Vṛtra is thus the personification of resistance—the Obstacle par excellence—and both the serpent and the *valá* cave are primordial manifestations of an enervating cosmic force that imprisons sunlight, water, life, and prosperity, especially in the form of livestock.[14] These myths suggest that the *sóma* ritual was performed at the beginning of the New Year as they may signal the dawning of the first day and the annual rebirth of the universe from the darkness, oppression, and chaos of a long wintry night. While it is by no means certain, the ritual may have been performed at the spring equinox in late March or, as Oberlies (1998: 331) suggests, around the time of summer, perhaps the solstice, and early autumn, as this was the season for migration and warfare (more on this shortly).[15] It seems, then, that through the performance of *sóma* rituals, early Vedic Āryans reenact Indra's cosmogonic and martial acts, while also marking the beginning of the migratory season, wherein the tribes drive their herds to new waterways and pasture. It also seems to be the case that ritual participants recount and valorize Indra's mythic deeds yearly to prepare themselves for cattle raids and potential conflict during migrations.

While Indra is the center of attention, a substantial component of the ritual activity involves the kindling and maintenance of the deified ritual Fire, Agni, whose presence is attested by his division into three fires that burn within the confines of a carefully laid out ritual ground that faces eastward, in the direction of the rising sun. Agni's principal role parallels that of the officiating Hotṛ priest, who recites hymns and manages the rite, and also to a lesser degree that of the Adhvaryu priest, who places food offerings into the main sacrificial fire, and whose main job, one poet tells us, is to prepare and offer *sóma* to Indra.[16] Agni's smoke thus carries the essence of the proffered oblations aloft to the gods to summon them to the ritual ground.

In the human realm, poets repeatedly praise wealthy patrons, lords, and chieftains for their financial support and protection and, in turn, command the gods to give these men prosperity, victory, sons, and a long life. It also seems to be the case that these individuals engage in gambling, verbal contests, and chariot races around the New Year ritual, and poets metaphorically equate their competitions with cattle raids and battle, especially Indra's cosmic conquests. More specifically, the ritual is primarily performed for a prominent male, known as the "sacrificer" (*yájamāna*), who receives the ritual benefits and in turn pays a sacrificial fee (*dákṣiṇā*) in the form of livestock, provisions, and gold to the ritual practitioners. In later periods, the sacrificer will sit passively on the sidelines, but in the Ṛgvedic period, he is active on the ritual ground and performs many of the ritual actions for himself or through other ritual participants.[17] Individual poets also recite hymns to praise and call upon various gods at specific points in the day's *sóma* offering, which is demarcated by three pressings of the plant (in the morning, midday, and evening). After the stalks of the plant are crushed with stones, the juices are strained to remove any impurities and then are mixed with milk, honey, and ghee.[18] Ritual participants offer the concoction to Indra, among other gods, and also drink it themselves. In addition, Indra is offered cooked oblations of grain and meat, which, the poets tell us, he devours voraciously. Much of the ritual activity is intended to empower Indra so that the deity can dominate the cosmos and conquer enemies, whether divine or human. The *Ṛgveda* is thus heavily informed by martial imagery, values, and purpose.

In light of this, Oberlies (1998) argues that early Vedic life oscillated between times of seasonal movement (*yóga*, "harnessing")—for warfare, cattle raids, and shifts to new pastures—and times of settled peace (*kṣéma*). Indra's primary function as chieftain (*rā́jan*) is to lead the tribes during seasonal migrations, and the god thus represents the "war king" (Kriegskönig), whose leadership relates to the control of a war band and dealings with foreign parties.[19] Taking his lead from Krick (1975) and Gladigow (1979), Oberlies (1998: 391–441) concludes that the aim of Ṛgvedic *sóma* rituals is to secure Indra's manifestation, and the war god's presence is attested by victory in battles.

Oberlies also asserts that the acts of gods such as Indra serve as the model for human behavior. Indra stands in closest connection to a tribe's actual chieftain and warlord, who, according to Oberlies (1998: 427), is also the sacrificer (*yájamāna*).[20] (I will say more on the identity of the *yájamāna* below.) This individual's primary role is to conquer enemies and lands for his tribe in keeping with precedents laid down by Indra's domination of the cosmos. Oberlies (1998: 454–464, 493–495) further argues that the divine identities of Indra and Soma frequently overlap. Soma/*sóma* is at once a god, a potent ritual drink,

and a chieftain, which suggests that it symbolizes the very role expected of those who drink it. Scharfe (1992) also agrees that the act of drinking *sóma* highlights the close relationship between Indra and the human chieftain. He argues that tribesmen elect their chieftain for plundering expeditions, and his eligibility to drink *sóma* comes from success in battle. A human chieftain is thus selected for specific martial purposes from among the warriors who have proved themselves most effective in combat, and drinking *sóma* confirms the warlord's position as first among the tribe. It is important to note here that, as Scharfe (1992: 311–312) points out, in Ṛgvedic culture there is no singular chieftain (*rā́jan*) among the gods (Indra's role as the "king of the gods" is a later development). In addition, the word *rā́jan* does not denote a permanent political station, but rather signifies a temporary or functional role of commandership over specific realms, periods of time, or groups of people.[21] For this reason, the translation "king" in the early Vedic period is somewhat inadequate (cf. Scharfe 1985: 546–548). This is evident in the fact that various deities and humans can be identified as chieftains. What is more, according to Scharfe, once Indra completes his martial responsibilities, his function appears to be dissolved, and this is also true for the god's instantiation in a human leader. In a more definitive manner, Oberlies (1998: 396–398) concludes that the war god not only symbolizes martial and political ideals, but also through the act of drinking *sóma* Indra's identity is ritually mapped onto that of the sacrificer (*yájamāna*), who, as a tribal leader, becomes a "human" (menschlich) Indra.

Throughout this work, I will examine the various ways that the war god's tough manly image corresponds to the interests and identities of ritual participants. In the following stanza, we can certainly see how the ritualized act of drinking *sóma* places Indra and the sacrificer in a close relationship with each other:

> ṚV.9.98.10: *índrāya soma pā́tave vṛtraghné pári ṣicyase, náre ca dákṣiṇāvate devā́ya sadanāsáde.*
>
> "O Soma, you are poured around for Indra, for Vṛtra smasher, to drink, and for the man who offers the sacrificial fee, for the god sitting on the seat."

This stanza clearly distinguishes between two individuals, the god Indra and the human sacrificer, both of whom partake of *sóma*.[22] But the identity of the "god sitting on the seat"—Indra or the sacrificer—is less clear; perhaps the ambiguity is intentional as the human sacrificer takes on Indra's divine qualities when he drinks *sóma*. This suggests that divine and human realms closely parallel each other—at least in ritual performances—and that the identity and

expectations of a god like Indra are ritually mapped onto the human sacrificer, particularly a chieftain. It seems, then, that just as it is true for the later Brāhmaṇical period (see Minkowski 1991: 69, 166–168), participants in Ṛgvedic *sóma* rites become "functional representatives" of gods in the ritual arena.

Such insights about the relationship between gods and humans in Ṛgvedic *sóma* rituals are significant for the underlying argument of this book, yet we should exercise some caution here since the ritual creation of this relationship is not as simple as it sounds.[23] The following chapters will examine various strategies that ritual practitioners employ to align the identities of humans and gods. Furthermore, while Indra's identity and manly exploits are representative of male leaders, especially the tribal chieftain (*rā́jan*), the sacrificer (*yájamāna*) did not always hold such a lofty political position; he could be, in increasing order of status, a head of a household (*gṛhápati*), a leader of the clan(s) (*viśpáti*), a lord of a settlement (*sátpati*), or a chieftain (*rā́jan*) (Brereton 2004: 331–332). The point here is that not all *sóma* rituals would have been so politically charged, yet we can see that political authority and even sovereignty lie at the heart of Ṛgvedic ritual performances, some of which may have involved the yearly selection and affirmation of a tribal warlord for times of seasonal migration.

Although the hymns of the *Ṛgveda* primarily attest a cult of Indra, Agni, and Soma—a cult directly concerned with masculinity, martiality, and rulership—this aspect of the Ṛgvedic tradition represents neither the entirety of early Vedic culture nor the entirety of the *Ṛgveda*, just its dominant focus.[24] The *Ṛgveda* certainly attests other cultic practices, albeit less well defined ones. In a complementary yet antagonistic relationship to the above divinities, the gods Mitra, Varuṇa, and Āryaman, collectively called the Ādityas, function as divine judges during times of peaceful settlement (*kṣéma*). As such, they deal with domestic affairs such as alliances, justice, punishment, and social customs.[25] The Ṛgvedic evidence considered herein relates predominantly to the former, well-attested cultic expression rather than to the latter; but this is not to say that the two oscillating realms of early Vedic life are mutually exclusive.

To understand the significance of these gods, the ritual practices directed toward them, the construction of a dominant form of masculinity, and the complex network of social, economic, and political relationships that Āryan men should share with one another, I will approach the text first and foremost philologically by paying special attention to the use of the terms for masculinity and the semantic fields in which they are embedded. It is only through a close reading of the text that we will understand the specific ways in which Ṛgvedic ritual participants formulate and encode the roles and identities of men. Second, I will locate the individuals who participate in Ṛgvedic rituals as much as

possible in their lived social and political worlds. To do this, we need to familiarize ourselves with a variety of social science and cultural studies approaches. Let us turn, then, to some of the theoretical problems and issues that present themselves when considering Ṛgvedic ritual practices, discourse, and the construction of masculinity.

Discourse and Practice in the *Ṛgveda*

With regard to the *Ṛgveda*, the primary individuals we are talking about are the actual performers of *sóma* rituals; namely, the poet-priests who recite their liturgical hymns in daylong rituals. While it is important to take into account the hands-on ritual activity of these individuals, we are largely concerned with their ritualized discourse as a form of strategic practice. For Foucault (1972, 1977), discourse does not just reflect meaning; it plays a direct role in constructing meaning and in defining types of knowledge as valuable, appropriate, and true. Furthermore, discourses—or more specifically "discursive formations" as groups of statements, ideas, images, and practices—demarcate and govern the acceptable and intelligible ways that a topic, activity, or institution can be discussed and conceptualized, as well as the ways one can and should conduct oneself in relation to it. Discursive formations thus influence how ideas are put into practice and how individuals use those ideas to regulate the conduct of others through specific discursive practices and disciplinary techniques. As Foucault concludes, knowledge about certain topics is inextricably linked with the workings of power as experts and professionals (those who have access to or control the means of producing knowledge) strive to regulate the identities and actions of individuals and particular groups by controlling the means to produce discourse and delimit knowledge. It is consequently in discourse that we can see the struggle of power and ideology as individuals and institutions use discursive formations to produce meaning, to control the means of producing knowledge, and to regulate social activity—that is, what individuals do. Foucault argues that a key way in which discursive formations do this is by conveying various "subject-positions," which are specific, often heavily circumscribed, modes of agency, subjectivity, and identity that people can express, enact, or embody in relation to particular forms of knowledge and practice.

Specific constructions of masculinity are clearly discursive formations (see Nixon 1997), and in the *Ṛgveda*, the circumscribed ways of being a man are encoded within liturgical hymns. For our purposes, individual stanzas within hymns can be seen not only as components of an inherited and formulaic ritual performance but also as strategic speech acts that present an idealized image of

men as tough, manly, and powerful and that encode the ways that men should conduct themselves and conceive of the world within which they live with respect to ritual, social, economic, and political ends. Therefore, the ritualized discourse of Ṛgvedic poet-priests at once reflects their inherited worldview and plays a direct role in constructing the roles, identities, and relationships that Āryan men should embody, enact, and maintain in their lived experience. Such discourse receives its authority in part from the very fact that it is heavily ritualized and directed toward the gods, who are themselves core discursive formations and abstract ideological projections of masculine ideals, social relationships, and political power. Consequently, ritual practitioners are not shy in reminding their audience about the supremacy of the gods and the importance of their ritual tradition in mediating them.

To illuminate the rationale and micropolitics that underlie discursive practices, we can also take our lead from Bourdieu, who asks us to see the multifaceted ways in which practices and ideologies are inherently "interested" in that they are always strategically directed toward the monopoly of material and symbolic capital. For Bourdieu, "strategy" refers to the ways that individuals regulate their practices, discursively or performatively; and rather than being calculated or predetermined, it points to a sense, feeling, or disposition for the correct or most productive way to accumulate wealth, authority, or a reputation within specific arenas. Consequently, Bourdieu's insights force us to recognize that all individuals exercise varying degrees of agency in their actions.

Bourdieu's notion of "symbolic capital" (1977: 171–183; 1990: 123–139) best captures the social significance of the terms for male identity in the *Ṛgveda* and also provides us with a way to understand the strategic reasons for why Āryan men engage in ritual performances and accept a dominant ideology that may put them in harm's way. Symbolic capital refers to accumulated and redeemable conceptualizations of prestige, celebrity, knowledge, or honor that are highly valued within a culture. It delineates what values, concepts, and ideals are appropriate for individuals to embody and strive after, and it marks exactly what or who is legitimate. The accumulation of such capital—whether discursively, conceptually, or concretely—by individuals or groups legitimizes them (for a short time, at least) and allows them to create and impose the standards of right and wrong. That is to say, just as material capital provides economic security and status, symbolic (or cultural) capital allows individuals to prosper in the world by giving them the knowledge and practical competence necessary to differentiate themselves from others less culturally endowed. For this reason, social life is characterized by competition for legitimacy, distinction, and inclusion, often to the exclusion and detriment of others, and such competition occurs in varying degrees just as much among individuals who

operate within the same group as it does from one group to another. The constant struggle for the accumulation of symbolic capital is thus "a fundamental dimension of social life" (Bourdieu 1990: 22). At the heart of social interactions lies an economy not only of material exchange but also of ideological transactions wherein individuals constantly seek to influence the opinion that people have of them and others so as to set a price on the quality of their social relationships.

It is an evident truth that the struggle for legitimacy is inherently relational as it requires the reciprocal, often competitive, interaction of individuals who may strive for their own recognition in exchange for wealth, or vice versa, and they may support or undermine each other's interests in their exchanges. However, this tit-for-tat social revanche or jockeying is not as simple as it sounds. As Bourdieu demonstrates, individual and institutional interests often remain "misrecognized" in society as this better serves the political and hierarchical ends of interpersonal or group relationships. In Bourdieu's own words, "What is essential *goes without saying because it comes without saying*: the tradition is silent" (1977: 167; emphasis in original). People may thus seek unarticulated forms of capital within their respective fields of interest and investment; that is, they may knowingly or unknowingly gain unexpressed or not immediately apparent benefits that underlie overt interactions and relationships. For example, people often do this by displaying a disinterested respect for the rule as this serves to put them in the right, to give them the advantage that comes from an air of "ethical impeccability" (Bourdieu 1977: 22). The point here is that few individuals seek to expose the arbitrary nature of their empowered and empowering relationships when they reap continued benefits from them (this also assumes they have the luxury or know-how to offer criticisms in the first place).

In the context of the *Ṛgveda*, we are dealing with ritual as a specific form of practice and a fundamental strategy of power. Drawing heavily on Bourdieu's work, Bell (1992) argues that ritualization is a particularly effective way to demarcate and control ideals and forms of practice so as to allow individuals to distinguish and privilege their values and activities over and above others. We will see that in the early Vedic context, Āryan men engage in ritual performances because they are the most authoritative way in which such individuals can struggle for forms of social legitimacy, can control political authority, and can gain economic security for themselves, their patrons, and their tribe. For Bell, ritualization also constitutes a relatively exclusive yet efficacious environment wherein individuals can strategically misrecognize their social and political purposes as well as the arbitrariness of their relationships. This is especially true in the case of myth as ritual participants can project their interests into a

divine realm and thereby cloak their strategies in realities that transcend the limits of human actors. Nevertheless, as Bell (1992: 180–181) points outs, ritualized practices do not represent a uniform method of social control, but provide only one of the many ways through which people can struggle for power while experiencing, embodying, and manipulating ideologies. Hence, rituals neither control individuals or groups nor are secondary to the workings of power and politics that exist apart from the ritual performance. On the contrary, ritual practices constitute particular mechanisms of social and political empowerment through which individuals can strategically (re)produce, (re) define, negotiate, or even resist empowered and empowering relationships and ideals (Bell 1992: 196). In this regard, Bell insightfully concludes:

> The ultimate purpose of ritualization is neither the immediate goals avowed by the community or the officiant nor the more abstract functions of social solidarity and conflict resolution: it is nothing other than the production of ritualized agents, persons who have an instinctive knowledge of these schemes embedded in their bodies, in their sense of reality, and in their understanding of how to act in ways that both maintain and qualify the complex microrelations of power. (221)

Consequently, people engage in ritualized practices and reproduce the importance of ritualization to exercise and capitalize on a process of "redemptive hegemony" (Bell 1992: 114–117), whereby, with each ritual performance, individuals and institutions can restate and re-create anew their social and political interests, relationships, and positions. As we will see, Ṛgvedic poet-priests ritualize the roles and identities of men and deploy the construction of masculinity to redeem their positions of power while legitimizing and reproducing the micropolitics of early Vedic society. The fundamental point we can take from Bell's work is that rather than interpret *sóma* rituals as an artificial, make-believe performance impartial to "real world" politics or as an irrational attempt to control unseen or physical forces, we can see the ways in which such rituals are presented and judged as the most appropriate thing to do to substantiate social, economic, and political interests. By paying close attention to the overt and implicit strategies, we can see how the Ṛgvedic worldview is shaped and how the identities, dispositions, and relationships of those individuals who move within it are constructed. As Bell states, "To analyze practice in terms of its vision of redemptive hegemony is, therefore, to formulate the unexpressed assumptions that constitute the actor's strategic understanding of the place, purpose, and trajectory of the act" (1992: 85).

Ṛgvedic Masculinity

Let us be clear from the start that the concepts "man" and "masculinity" are gendered constructions. As Connell (2005: 22–29) aptly observes, being a man or a woman means enacting a set of socially learned expectations, norms, and roles that are linked to, but not inherently determined by, sex and biological status. Normative masculine roles and expectations are the product of complex and shifting variables, which are deeply embedded in political institutions, social formations, and economic structures. Men almost always dominate these institutions so that they can control, exploit, and benefit from uneven power relations. The construction of a dominant normative form of masculinity is thus a strategic response to specific situations, yet it requires constant reproduction and the suppression of alternatives. In other words, masculinity is not a natural, fixed, or inevitable characteristic of males. No one is born with it. Masculinity is something that is learned and transmitted in a world of social agency. It is a discursive formation and an embodied posture and projection, a performance in response to social, economic, and political pressures and ideologies (Adams and Savran 2002; Connell 2005).

To highlight this in the early Vedic context, we can simply ask the question: Where does manhood come from? According to the poet-priests, it comes from their ritual performances and the very gods they summon. This also highlights one of the many strategies by which Ṛgvedic poet-priests reproduce and legitimize their ritual performances as intrinsic to a man's identity and well-being. I will examine this claim in depth throughout the chapters. For now, consider the following stanza, in which a poet urges Indra to convey physical strength and manhood to ritual participants:

> ṚV.8.98.10: *tváṃ na indrā́ bharaṁ́ ójo nṛ́mṇáṃ śatakrato vicarṣaṇe, ā́ vīrám pṛtanāṣā́ham.*
>
> "O Indra, bring here to us power, [bring to us] manhood, O one of a hundred resolves, O unbounded one, here [bring to us] a brave man who is dominant in battles."[26]

It is unclear whether Indra is the brave man (*vīrá*) in question or whether his presence will make human warriors strong, manly, and victorious. The latter scenario carries some weight since the poet asks Indra for a "bounty of good men, man-power" (*suvírya*) several stanzas later.[27] This example also highlights the fact that ritual practitioners intertwine individual, communal, and cosmic realms as a warrior's masculine identity and

the supremacy of his clan depend on Indra's presence and of course a ritual performance to summon him. In a similar vein, another poet asserts that manhood is equally produced in a ritual performance and fostered within the community:

> ṚV.7.56.5: *sā́ víṭ suvírā marúdbhir astu sanā́t sáhantī púṣyantī nṛ́mṇám.*
>
> "Let this clan be well manned through the Maruts; [this clan] dominating from of old, fostering manhood."

Because he uses the possessive compound *suvíra-* ("of good men, well manned"), it is unclear whether the poet wants the clan to have one or many warriors. If we interpret it as singular it could refer to Indra who brings his warrior band, the Maruts. However, given its use elsewhere, it more likely signals the control of many men.[28] The poet may intend the Maruts to be the clan's warriors, yet two stanzas later he defines his clansmen in masculine and martial terms as powerful and mighty on account of the Maruts.[29] This suggests that in the above stanza, the Maruts are the instrument through which the clan obtains men who are manly and warlike, and perhaps such warriors are even identified with their divine masculine counterparts. Consequently, through their warriors and through deities such as the Maruts, the clan fosters manhood, which is here underscored by its long-held commitment to violence (√*sah* "to conquer, dominate; to be victorious").

These two examples highlight the idea that masculinity and strength in ancient India derive in part from ritual participation, rather than being a natural consequence of gender. It is easy to see that the masculine terminology not only denotes physical qualities, but also signifies important forms of symbolic capital—a wholly different form of power. Ṛgvedic poet-priests thus encode their ritualized ideology in a man's very sense of himself, as he is impotent without the presence of manly gods. In this regard, we can see Bourdieu's (1977: 116) idea of "mimesis" at work in the early Vedic context as the metaphorical and metonymic relationships set up between humans, their desires, and the physical or supernatural world serve to foster specific and imitative modes of ritual and practical behavior. The process of interconnecting physical, ritual, and cosmological realities serves then to fuse specific spheres of practice and knowledge within the bodies of men. Hence, if Āryan men derive a habituated sense of themselves and their place in society and in the cosmos from ritual performances, then they tacitly approve and reproduce the Ṛgvedic social and ritual worldview by performatively embracing it.[30]

We need, then, to understand the importance of the body in constructing masculinity. As Connell (2005: 45) points out, masculinity is "almost always thought to proceed from men's bodies—to be inherent in a male body or to express something about a male body." I will consider the construction of the body in Ṛgvedic rituals in more depth throughout the chapters (esp. 3 and 4); suffice it to say here that in early Vedic culture, the male body (particularly its masculine virility and raw power) undoubtedly functions as a "natural symbol" of male identity[31] or, better yet, that "three bodies"—the individual, social, and political—are melded in a complex relationship with one another.[32] We can certainly infer that Āryan men conditioned themselves through physical acts, yet, as the above examples illustrate, Ṛgvedic poets repeatedly assert that the male body is symbolically shaped through ritual performances. Body theory asks us to see the ways in which the physical self and representations of such are closely linked to institutions of social and political power.[33] For Foucault (1977: 63), the body is more than just a natural or biological phenomenon, as our knowledge, understanding, and even use of our bodies is produced within discourse that classifies and inscribes the body with historically specific meanings and affects. This not only allows the body and its affects to be meaningfully interpreted by peers; it also allows it to be regulated and controlled by those that regulate and control the discourse about the body. In a similar vein, Bell (1992: 96–100, 204) argues that ritualization is particularly embedded within the dynamics of the body as its repetitive and circumscribed movements shape the body, the person, and the layered networks of power. Ritualization constitutes a direct means to manipulate the representations, conduct, and politics of a symbolically defined social body and the body of society at large. Any analysis of Ṛgvedic masculinity must then take into account how poet-priests use ritualized discourse and practices to construct and manipulate the way in which men were supposed to understand and use their bodies. The point here is that conceptualizations of the body are constructed to reproduce and map specific social and political roles and relationships onto the body. This process serves to naturalize such values and makes them appear to be intrinsic factors of individual and social identity. As Bourdieu observes, the justification of the masculine-patriarchal social hierarchy derives its power from the fact that "*it legitimates a relationship of domination by embedding it in a biological nature that is itself a naturalized social construction*" (2001: 23; emphasis in original). The body is therefore more than just flesh and blood and more than a mere symbol or object of knowledge or discourse, as the social construction of the body defines its actual practices and produces appropriate behavior and socialized bodies (cf. Connerton 1989: 104).

Encoding and Decoding Ṛgvedic Ideology

In light of the above theoretical considerations, it is necessary to clarify just exactly who the men are that participate in Ṛgvedic rituals or, better yet, who exactly are the transmitters of Ṛgvedic discourse and ideology and who are their presumed audience. What we can say for certain, or at least what we can derive from their own representations, is that the individuals who create, perform, and control the Ṛgvedic ritual tradition are male poet-priests. They sing liturgical hymns in ritual performances; sacrifice food offerings into the ritual fire; press, purify, and offer *sóma* to various figures, divine and human; and invoke, praise, and ultimately deploy such gods as Indra and Agni as masculine role models for their own and communal ends. Ṛgvedic poet-priests thus use their ritual performances to propagate a hegemonic ideology about masculinity that is directed toward fellow ritual participants, especially clans- or tribesmen; wealthy patrons; and martially inclined men, namely, warriors and chieftains.

Whether or not these individuals acted upon the dominant ideology is another issue altogether. Because a tension exists between the institutionalized discursive production of androcentric ideals and what real men may have accepted as legitimate, reasonable, and worth their time, there are limitations to what we can know about masculinity in the *Ṛgveda*, as well as what we can surmise about the agency of ritual participants. In other words, it is almost impossible to know how Āryan men decoded and received Ṛgvedic discourse and how they embodied and enacted its ideals. Poet-priests certainly employ various discursive strategies to ritualize and overdetermine masculine ideals, roles, and relationships so as to ensure that their audience will interpret the hegemonic ideology according to its dominant meaning. For example, poet-priests are unwavering in their insistence that to be fully prepared for war, men need Indra on their side and that this relationship can be achieved only through ritual performances. Moreover, the fact that ritual practitioners reproduce the dominant masculine ideology across all historically identifiable layers of the *Ṛgveda* underscores the effort and degree to which they transmit and enforce the parameters within which the hegemonic form of masculinity is supposed to be understood as the most legitimate way for all Āryan men to live. As Hall (1980: 128–136) points out, rarely does the production of discourse continue unless its preferred meanings are translated into social practices by individuals who decode it in its dominant form for their own benefit. We can safely assume that as the primary proponents of Ṛgvedic ideology, poet-priests were influenced by the very values, practices, and expectations they promote, and this would presumably have been the case for the recipients of their discourse, that is, men who seek martial and

political recognition. Hence, while we lack direct access to the individuals who may or may not have adopted the Ṛgvedic worldview in part or in full, we can draw some basic conclusions about the social and political identities and practices of the receivers of early Vedic ritual discourse because the production of meaning and its reception, while not identical, are reciprocally related.

We need to be more specific about just who these men are, however. Before we can talk meaningfully about the individuals who actually perform rituals in ancient India, let us first ascertain how ritual practitioners characterize the men to whom their ritual rhetoric and activity are directed. Consider three stanzas from family book hymns:

> ṚV.2.12.8: *yáṃ krándasī saṃyatí vihváyete páre 'vara ubháyā amítrāḥ, samānáṃ cid rátham ātasthivā́ṃsā nā́nā havete sá janāsa índraḥ.*
>
> "[Indra] whom the two shouting sides, coming together, invoke variously, both without an alliance, here and over there; [whom] the two, having mounted the same chariot, invoke individually; he, O peoples, is Indra."
>
> ṚV.4.25.8: *índram páre 'vare madhyamā́sa índraṃ yā́ntó 'vasitāsa índram, índraṃ kṣiyánta utá yúdhyamānā índraṃ náro vājayánto havante.*
>
> "Those here, there, and in the middle [invoke] Indra; those traveling [invoke] Indra and those at rest [invoke] Indra; those dwelling in peace and those fighting [invoke] Indra; men, competing for the prize, invoke Indra."
>
> ṚV.7.27.1: *índraṃ náro nemádhitā havante yát pā́ryā yunájate dhíyas tā́ḥ, śū́ro nṛ́ṣātā śávasaś cakānā́ ā́ gómati vrajé bhajā tvā́ṃ naḥ.*
>
> "Men invoke Indra when facing each other [before battle], since he will yoke these decisive insights. The champion is taking pleasure in [his] might at winning over men: Allot shares to us here in the pen containing cattle."

At first glance, the use of the verb √*hū/hvā* ("to call on, invoke") suggests that these men call on Indra with war cries and pleas before presumably charging headlong into the fray (or while conducting their daily affairs). However, this verb consistently denotes the process of invoking various gods through ritual performances. Its use in these limited examples may suggest that these men are engaged in ritual practices, particularly before battle. Of course, the warriors may be invoking Indra through their proxy poet-priests, but it may also be the case that these men take on ritual roles in summoning

Indra before they engage in the battle themselves.[34] Indeed, a family book poet explicitly states this in the following stanza to the war god:

> ṚV.7.30.2: *hávanta u tvā hávyaṃ vívāci tanū́ṣu śū́rāḥ sū́ryasya sātaú, tváṃ víśveṣu sényo jáneṣu tváṃ vṛtrā́ṇi randhayā suhántu.*
>
> "In their own persons, in the verbal contest, the champions invoke you, who can be invoked, in the winning of the sun. Among all peoples, you embody the army: Make the obstacles subject to a good smashing."

In chapter 3, we will see that the term *śū́ra* ("big/strong man, champion") denotes a specialized martial role. In this stanza, the use of *tanū́* ("body, self; in person") in the locative plural case strongly suggests that human champions are actually invoking Indra in the ritual arena. The poets of all these stanzas thus maintain that men need to secure Indra's presence and partnership to be victorious in battle and that this is only possibly through the performance of Ṛgvedic *sóma* rituals. What is more, while we can assume that these poets are documenting a reality of their socioritual world, they are also transmitting an ideal in which all warriors, whether friend or foe, are expected to invoke their war god through ritual performances in which they are active participants.

These examples clarify the way in which ritualists depict their presumed audience and the way the recipients of Ṛgvedic discourse should conduct themselves. To be precise, Ṛgvedic poets repeatedly state that martially inclined men should maintain a direct relationship with Indra through ritual performances, in which they are active participants, and, of course, through victory in battle. In this vein, an early poet explicitly asserts that his fellow ritual participants and clansmen place their well-being and security in Indra's hands when they go to war:

> ṚV.6.36.1-2, to Indra: *satrā́ mádāsas táva viśvájanyāḥ satrā́ rā́yó 'dha yé pā́rthivāsaḥ, satrā́ vā́jānām abhavo vibhaktā́ yád devéṣu dhāráyathā asuryàm. ánu prá yeje jána ójo asya satrā́ dadhire ánu vīryā̀ya, syūmagṛ́bhe dúdhayé 'rvate ca krátuṃ vṛñjanty ápi vṛtrahátye.*
>
> "The exhilarations that belong to all peoples belong completely to you, and completely the riches, which are of the earth. You have completely become the dispenser of prizes, since you uphold [your] lordship among the gods. A tribesman has offered fore and after sacrifices to his power. They [tribal members] have completely yielded to [his] manliness. And to the wild race horse who seizes the reins [Indra] they turn [their] resolve at the smashing of Vṛtra [or obstacles]."

We can see here the way in which this early poet aligns the identities and intentions of his fellow men with their war god. First, one of them is ritually active as he performs sacrifices to the war god's physical strength (*ójas*). Second, the poet states that all the tribesmen submit themselves to his potent aggressive manliness (*vīryà*). Third, the poet's use of the term *krátu* ("resolve, purpose, determination") also highlights the connection between Indra and his worshippers.[35] Indra frequently takes the epithet "one of a hundred resolves" (*śatákratu*) and is considered to be "a man of a hundred resolves, a flood of capabilities" and "a man whose resolve cannot be obstructed."[36] He is also called "manly (*nárya*) due to his resolve and masculine acts/qualities (*paúṃsya-*)."[37] These examples highlight the connection between being a man and possessing a decisive mental trait, and they allow us to see the way in which the above poet portrays his tribesmen and Indra in similar terms; the former should embody their war god's mental grit when confronting either the cosmic serpent Vṛtra or human enemies. In fact, another poet from the earliest layer states that his men should imitate their god of war when they head into battle:

> ṚV.4.24.3-5: *tám ín náro ví hvayante samīké ririkvā́ṃsas tanvàḥ kṛṇvata trā́m, mithó yát tyāgám ubháyāso ágman náras tokásya tánayasya sātaú. kratūyánti kṣitáyo yóga ugrāśuṣāṇā́so mithó árṇasātau, sáṃ yád víśó 'vavṛtranta yudhmā́ ád ín néma indrayante abhīke. ád íd dha néma indriyáṃ yajanta ā́d ít paktíḥ puroḷā́śaṃ riricyāt, ā́d ít sómo ví papṛcyād ásuṣvīn ā́d íj jujoṣa vṛṣabháṃ yájadhyai.*
>
> "Indeed, men separately invoke him [Indra] in their contests with one another. Having surrendered their bodies, they made him [the body's] preserver, when, on opposite sides, the men in both camps have given themselves to abandon in the winning of offspring and descendants. The settlements act with resolve in times of harnessing [seasonal migration], O powerful one, exerting themselves, on opposite sides, in the winning of swollen rivers. When the fighting clans have turned toward one another, just then do some act as Indra in the encounter. For just then do others gain through sacrifice that which is Indra-like. Just then should cooked food supersede the rice cake. Just then should *sóma* keep separate those who do not press [it]. Just then did he find pleasure in the bull to be offered sacrifice."

As we can see, Indra is the focus of Ṛgvedic *sóma* rituals at the beginning of the migratory season (*yóga*) when communities ritually prepare for any conflict or strife. In the same vein as the examples presented above, the opening line of

stanza 3 here emphasizes the fact that rival men summon Indra to be successful in battle through a ritual performance in which they are active participants, and their physical well-being is dependent on Indra's presence. To be sure, in stanza 4, the warring clans fight during times of migration with their war god's determination (√*kratūy*). In the second half of this stanza, the exact meaning of the denominative hapax verb √*indray* is unclear. Verbs of this variety can mean "to act as, behave like"; "to attend to, focus on"; and "to desire, wish for." Jamison (1983: 52) translates √*indray* as "acts like Indra" in the same fashion as √*vīray* "acts like a hero" (see below). In contrast, Geldner (1951, 1:451) translates the verb as "some/these ones long for Indra" (verlangen die einen . . . nach Indra). In either case, the implication is clear: Warriors need Indra on their side and perhaps need to act like him to be victorious in battle. Furthermore, the poet seems to juxtapose the actions of these warriors with the activity of ritualists, who, in stanza 5, gain a modicum of Indra's physical nature (*indriyá*) through their ritual performance.[38] It seems that some Āryan men can be Indra-like in battle, while others can claim to be like their war god through ritual acts. These three stanzas thus underscore the ritualized way that warring men seek Indra's presence before conflict and the way that they actually embody and act upon Indra's example in the heat of battle or in their ritual performances. What is more, Ṛgvedic poet-priests present two closely related, overlapping ways in which men can demonstrate their manliness—one martial and the other priestly. Nevertheless, these two alternative expressions of masculinity are embedded in the same normative ideology and represented by the same object of discourse, in the above cases most clearly by the war god Indra.

A late poet reproduces this same discursive strategy in the final layer of the text, wherein he explicitly states that his male audience should follow Indra's warlike example:

> ṚV.10.103.6: *gotrabhídaṃ govídaṃ vájrabāhuṃ jáyantam ájma pramṛṇántam ójasā, imáṃ sajātā ánu vīrayadhvam índraṃ sakhāyo ánu sáṃ rabhadhvam.*
>
> "[He who] split open the cow pens, finding the cows, mace in hand, winning the course, and pulverizing with power: O relatives, let all of you act as brave men in imitation of this one, O partners, let you altogether embrace Indra."

For this late poet, Indra's cattle raiding and displays of strength are exemplary for humans. For this reason, the poet encourages his assembled kinsmen to model their behavior on their war god; that is, to act as brave men (√*vīray*),[39] and he also employs the physical metaphor of embracing Indra to underscore

the personal nature of this relationship. As a discursive formation, Indra is the exemplary combatant who embodies all the various functions, characteristics, and responsibilities that real humans are expected to live up to, whether poet-priests or warriors.[40] Oldenberg (1988 [1894]: 140) observed that many of the Ṛgvedic "heroes" are regarded as founders of their clans and are frequently considered to be Indra's protégés and companions-in-arms, especially during the war god's battles with rivals. Therefore, since Indra's persona is representative of early Vedic men, in particular warriors, they should act like him and embody his physical characteristics and powers.[41] And it is Ṛgvedic poet-priests who transmit this ideology and make a relationship between men and gods such as Indra possible within ritual performances. We need only look to the numerous amulet hymns in the *Atharvaveda* for corroborating evidence for a similar scenario wherein ritual practitioners bind the physical powers of various gods, particularly Indra's, on warriors and chieftains (see Whitaker 2004).

The examples presented above highlight the way in which poet-priests prescriptively associate martially inclined men with Indra. We can also see the negative way in which they censure a man and subject him to the deity's wrath if he tries to subvert the necessity of maintaining a relationship with Indra through ritual performances:

> ṚV.7.18.16ab: *ardháṃ vīrásya śṛtapā́m anindrám párā śárdhantaṃ nunude abhí kṣā́m*.
>
> "The one who drinks the cooked oblation without Indra is half of a brave man, the one who acts with hubris, did he [Indra, even] from a distance, slam against the ground."

This hemistich comes from the "Ten Kings' Battle" hymn, which lauds Indra's victory over a rival confederation of warlords for the famed human chieftain Sudās. The poet is clear that a man who fails to share with Indra a heated ritual offering (milk, perhaps *sóma*) is less than a full man or warrior (*vīrá*). So the poet negatively characterizes this individual as unmanly because he participated in a ritual that failed to establish a relationship with Indra; indeed, this is pure defiance or arrogant hubris (√*śṛdh*).[42] In the context of the hymn, the man does not seem to be a specific person, but appears to stand for one or all of the enemy warlords who, as the poet implies, were unsuccessful in securing Indra's presence ritually and were thus defeated in battle. The poet uses this "every man" then to underscore the fact that Indra will subjugate enemies who fail to perform their ritual duties correctly (a further implication is that the enemy ritualists lack the skill to invoke Indra in the first place). What is more, the warning works indirectly to remind the poet's men, and even Sudās himself,

of their ritual responsibilities. The point here is that without Indra, men cannot be victorious in battle, and they are thus in danger, especially from the war god himself. The only way one can foster a relationship with the deity is through the performance of *sóma* rituals, yet it seems that Sudās' enemies were ritually impotent and consequently they were emasculated and conquered.

Thus Indra's martial activity represents the ideal that Āryan men should copy, and they should match their war god in strength, manliness, and sheer domination. As we will see, poet-priests propagate this ideology so as to gain wealth and security from martial excursions for themselves and their clan, and warriors, in turn, benefit from this relationship by receiving fame and of course Indra's partnership. The ritualized strategy that goes unsaid here lies in the fact that ritual practitioners are able to make their ritual tradition intrinsic to the technology of war and the well-being of martially inclined men. They do this by making ritual participation indispensable for men who need Indra on their side to secure victory. Poet-priests thus ritualize the ideal that men must seek their war god's partnership and presence to reproduce and legitimize the Ṛgvedic ritual tradition and their own positions within it.

Who are the men who propagate this ideology? In the early Vedic period, we should not reify poets, priests, or warriors as discrete classes or professions. The *Ṛgveda* attests various ritual roles (*hótṛ*, *adhvaryú*, *brahmán*, *ṛ́ṣi*, *kaví*, *vípra*, *ṛtvíj*, *yájamāna*); martial roles (*vīrá*, *yodhá*, *yudhmá*, *sátvan*, *śū́ra*); and political positions, such as lords (*gṛ́hapati*, *viśpáti*, *sátpati*, *ásura*), patrons (*maghávan*, *suvíra*, *sūrí*), and rulers (*rā́jan*, *samrā́j*). Later periods of Vedic culture definitely attest two relatively bifurcated and fixed social classes (*varṇa-*); one priestly (*brāhmaṇa*), the other martial-political (*kṣatriya*). In contrast, the evidence for the Ṛgvedic period suggests that such a division does not exist; poetic, priestly, and martial realms are fluid and dynamic, and they frequently overlap. Ritually active men embody and perform poetic, priestly, and martial roles to, we can assume, varying levels of specialization, and some may have performed all three at once.[43] We have just seen that martially inclined men actively participate in rituals to invoke Indra and place themselves in a direct relationship with him. The close relationship between poetic, priestly, and martial roles is also evident at the divine level in the example of the Maruts, who frequently serve as both poet-priests and warriors.[44] Furthermore, Indra plays an active role in rituals in the form of his priestly alter ego Bṛhaspati/Brahmaṇaspati ("Lord of the Sacred Formulation").[45] As Bṛhaspati, the war god leads a cohort of prototypical poet-priests, the Aṅgirases, in helping him smash open the *valá* cave to release the sun and cows. It is in this role that we can also see one of the ritualized ways in which poet-priests align the identities and actions of humans with Indra. Consider two stanzas from a family book poet:

ṚV.2.25.2: *vīrébhir vīrā́n vanavad vanuṣyató góbhī rayím paprathad bódhati tmánā, tokáṃ ca tásya tánayaṃ ca vardhate yáṃyaṃ yújaṃ kṛṇuté bráhmaṇas pátiḥ.*

"With brave men, he will vanquish covetous brave men. With cows, he will enlarge his wealth. He will become aware on his own accord that his offspring and descendants are strengthened, he whomever the lord of the sacred formulation makes a yokemate."[46]

ṚV.2.25.4: *tásmā arṣanti divyā́ asaścátaḥ sá sátvabhiḥ prathamó góṣu gachati, ánibhṛṣṭataviṣir hanty ójasā yáṃyaṃ yújaṃ kṛṇuté bráhmaṇas pátiḥ.*

"The heavenly [Waters], never drying up, rush toward him. As the foremost, he goes among the cattle with his true men. With vigor that is not dulled he smashes with power, he whomever the lord of the sacred formulation makes a yokemate."

In the *Ṛgveda*, the term *yúj* (a root noun from √*yuj* "to yoke") is predominately associated with Indra, and thus a "yokemate" often acts as a kind of comrade-in-arms in conjunction with the war god (perhaps as one who is "yoked" to his god).[47] In these stanzas, the poet portrays a process in which Indra enacts his priestly role as Bṛhaspati to place himself in a specific ritualized relationship with one of his worshippers.[48] The poet also describes this individual in martial and mythic terms similar to those used for Indra. For example, in both stanzas, the yokemate commands men (*vīrá-*, *sátvan-*) in what looks like a cattle raid.[49] According to Schmidt (1968: 114), the individual whom Bṛhaspati consecrates as Indra's yokemate here is the human representative of Indra; that is, the chieftain. If we exercise some restraint, then the yokemate would be a ritual sacrificer (*yájamāna*), and only potentially a chieftain (*rā́jan*).[50] Whoever he is, he is expected to emulate and act in partnership with Indra/Bṛhaspati. In this vein, Schmidt (1968) has convincingly demonstrated that the *yájamāna* is an active participant who performs various duties in early Vedic rituals, as opposed to being a passive spectator and sponsor of rituals in the classical Vedic period. Because Indra takes on the priestly role of Bṛhaspati, especially in the Vala myth, Schmidt (1968: 237–245) states that Indra's priestly role reflects a time when early Vedic chieftains acted as priests.[51] The *yájamāna* thus embodies both priestly and kingly functions as seen in the figures of Indra and Bṛhaspati (Schmidt 1968: 94–122).[52] Brereton summarizes Schmidt's thesis here: "The image of king as priest in the Vala narrative reflects an early role of the sacrificer as a central ritual actor" (2004: 330). While the *yájamāna* does not have much of a speaking role in the classical Vedic period, Brereton also argues that

as a "sage" (*kaví*) and "ritual expert" (*vedhás*), the *yájamāna* participated and spoke in early Vedic rituals, and thereby demonstrated his knowledge and command of the rite. Furthermore, as Krick (1982: 56) and Heesterman (1993: 144) point out, because Agni is consistently connected with the "house or clan lord" (*gṛhápati*, *víśpati*) and Hotṛ priest, and given the close connections between Agni and the *yájamāna*, then this may indicate that the *yájamāna* could originally act as the Hotṛ priest as well.[53] However, as Brereton (2004: 332–333) suggests, because their respective ritual roles are to a certain extent distinct, then the *yájamāna* need not always carry out the Hotṛ priest's role. The point here is that in the early Vedic period, the ritual sacrificer is an active ritual participant, and this is evident in the term *yájamāna* itself, which, as a middle-voice present participle, literally means "performing the sacrifice for himself."[54] If we return to the role of Indra/Bṛhaspati, then a man seeking political status or martial support cannot align himself with Indra without a ritual performance and priestly figures, including the war god himself in priestly garb, to foster this relationship. Indeed, if the yokemate is the ritually active *yájamāna* in the above stanzas, and possibly a chieftain (*rā́jan*), then it may be the case that he enacts the role of Indra to take on the role of Bṛhaspati and connect himself with Indra. To put it another way, the *yájamāna* puts himself in a direct relationship with certain gods by performing the roles of those very gods in a ritual performance.[55]

Given the examples presented above, and also those of Indra/Bṛhaspati, the Maruts, and the *yájamāna*, the evidence for the Ṛgvedic period suggests that some men could simultaneously act as poet-priests and hold political positions and carry out martial exploits. This is nowhere more evident than in the example of chieftain Trasadasyu, who acts as a poet and would have been the *yájamāna* at his ritual performance and who is also, of course, a political leader and warlord. According to the *Sarvānukramaṇī*—the index of composers of Ṛgvedic hymns—Trasadasyu is the author of ṚV.4.42.1–10. Lommel (1978: 275–281) states that in stanzas 1–6, Trasadasyu actually speaks in praise of himself at his royal consecration, where, indeed, the ruler is compared to the kingly gods Indra and Varuṇa. Throughout the hymn, Trasadasyu claims lifelong sovereignty over the earth, cosmos, and all the people when *sóma* and hymns exhilarate him.[56] He explicitly states that he is chieftain Varuṇa (2a: *ahám rā́jā váruṇaḥ*-), and both Indra and Varuṇa (3a: *ahám índraḥ váruṇaḥ*). He does battle as "munificent Indra" (5c: *kṛṇómi ājím maghávā ahám índraḥ*). He possesses the war god's masculine qualities of "supreme power" (5d: *abhíbhūtyojāḥ*),[57] and his "unassailable, divine dominating strength" (6b: *daívyaṃ sáho . . . ápratītam*).[58] As a result, another ritual participant twice calls Trasadasyu "half-god" (8d, 9d: *ardhadevám*).

According to Schmidt (1992: 340), Indra is identified with summer and Varuṇa with winter, and "King Trasadasyu impersonates both Varuṇa and Indra by performing their functions according to the demands of the seasons."[59] For our purposes, Trasadasyu is the perfect encoder and decoder of the dominant Ṛgvedic ideology as he interprets his masculine identity and political position in early Vedic ritual culture within the hegemonic institutionalized framework. This is especially evident in the fact that he explicitly and strategically aligns his identity with Indra and Varuṇa in a ritual performance. Moreover, Trasadasyu enacts a priestly role by reciting his own poetic hymn, and, because of his liturgy, one of his fellow poet-priests calls him a "ritual master" (7b: voc. *vedhaḥ*). Trasadasyu thus legitimizes his rulership by aligning his identity with Indra and Varuṇa, and in turn they endorse his right to rule. In claiming the war god's divine status and attributes, the chieftain also displays his masculinity in terms of the dominant ideology. Therefore, it is primarily through a ritual performance in which he is an active participant that this leader can embody and represent authoritatively his masculine identity, political status, and commitment to participate in the Ṛgvedic ritual tradition. We can see here Bell's (1992: 206) formulation that "the deployment of ritualization, consciously or unconsciously, is the deployment of a particular construction of power relationships, a particular relationship of domination, consent, and resistance." The point here is that even famed chieftains such as Trasadasyu and Sudās need to subsume their political identities under the auspices of kingly gods, as well as carrying out their martial exploits in Indra's name.[60] What is more, this can be affirmed only in a ritual performance, and Ṛgvedic poet-priests are the individuals who propagate this ideology for various ends and ascribe to it a degree of authority by projecting it into the divine realm. Trasadasyu's example thus strongly suggests that one man internalized the dominant androcentric ideology—at least this is what ritual practitioners have recorded—and also that some men, especially the *yájamāna*, and of course in this case a chieftain, acted in poetic, priestly, and martial-political roles. Furthermore, ritual participants not only eulogize Indra with ritual hymns; they also encode in gods such as Indra concrete ritual, social, and martial-political responsibilities and communicate these directly to human warriors and chieftains, who are present in ritual performances and who are expected to embody and carry out such expectations in their lived world. Nevertheless, Trasadasyu's example does not mean that all ritual participants laid claim to a divine standing or were even afforded one in the ritual arena (and perhaps in society at large), yet it does imply that this was a possibility for some chieftains or at least one.

The fact that men in ancient India can act at once as ritual officiants, warriors, and chieftains is further complicated by the fact that poet-priests

frequently conceive of their rituals as necessary components of battle. This allows ritual practitioners to display their masculinity in martial terms and to make their ritual performances intrinsic to any martial success, whether in divine or human realms. For example, this is evident in the cosmogonic myth of Indra's assault on the mountain cave (*valá*) to free sunlight and cows (see Schmidt 1968). As the primordial disciples of Bṛhaspati, the Aṅgiras poet-priests help the war god open up the enclosure through the raw power and insightful use of their hymns. This cosmic event functions as a kind of charter myth about the inherent power of poetic speech and ritual performances, that is, about the inherent power of ritualists themselves. In the human world, a family book poet metaphorically compares his sacrifice to a *vīrá* in an overtly martial manner and thereby makes his ritual performance equivalent to a fighting man and a core part of the technology of war.[61] Other poets also talk as if they go into battle. Consider a stanza in which the poet-priest first positions himself on the ritual ground in relation to Indra, and then other gods, who have his back, so to speak:

> ṚV.8.100.1: *ayáṃ ta emi tanvà purástād víśve devā́ abhí mā yanti paścā́t, yadā́ máhyaṃ dídharo bhāgám indrā́d ín máyā kṛṇavo vīryà̀ṇi.*
>
> "Here I go with my body to the east of you. All gods advance toward me from the west. When you will maintain a portion for me, O Indra, then you will perform manly acts with [or through] me."

The poet recites his hymn to solicit rewards from Indra, yet in the final line, his use of the instrumental pronoun is unclear. He either supports his war god's manly activity through his ritual performance or participates in real combat or dangerous acts with Indra at his side. Indeed, in the next stanza, he states that with Indra as his partner, the two will smash many obstacles together.[62] The point here is that this poet-priest characterizes himself and his ritual activities in masculine and martial terms. He also ascribes agency to Indra, yet limits it by making his ritualized support necessary for the success of the war god's manly activity. As we will see, poet-priests display their masculinity in rituals and use their ritualized knowledge and hymns to defeat enemies and to aid gods such as Indra in battle. This highlights the fact that, first, Ṛgvedic poet-priests think and talk of themselves in androcentric and martial terms, and some even assert their power over the war god; and, second, that Ṛgvedic rhetoric is defined by opposition, struggle, and competition, whether or not real strife is at stake. It may also mean that ritually active Āryan men were able to downplay the need for real combat in some cases, and were even able to avoid it by ritualizing their martial activity so as to support Indra rather than actually

participating in battle (we saw this at ṚV.4.24.3-5, cited above). Ṛgvedic ritualists thus propagate two dominant ways in which men can display their masculinity, one poetic-priestly, the other martial-political: it is manly and tough to fight, and manly and tough to sing about fighting. It is nevertheless important to remember that both expressions of manhood are embedded in the same ritualized ideology, and both are expressed through overlapping or identical terms, tropes, and metaphors. The point here is that at the level of discourse, Āryan men ritually propagate a hegemonic form of masculinity wherein they cannot but think of themselves to a certain degree as poet-priests and warriors at the same time.

We can now draw some initial conclusions about the encoders and decoders of Ṛgvedic discourse and ideology. At the most immediate level, the presumed audience of Ṛgvedic discourse is first and foremost the men who act as poet-priests themselves. When we make assumptions about the decoders of Ṛgvedic discourse, we need not look further than the actual reciters and performers of ritual liturgies, who presumably were directly exposed to and invested in the dominant androcentric ideology as they composed hymns and prepared themselves for ritual performances all year long. Of course, the poet-priests repeatedly state that their audience is made up of patrons, warriors, chieftains, and, more generally, clans and tribes. Yet, since some men in ancient India actively participate in rituals, undertake cattle raids and open warfare, and hold political positions, we should not reify or bifurcate the encoders and decoders of Ṛgvedic discourse into two distinct groups; as if some men in early Vedic society were solely professional bards or ritualists and others were strictly committed to martial exploits and political leadership. This may very well have been the case in some instances, but given all the examples presented above in which men seek Indra's partnership and powers before battle, or even claim a ritualized form of apotheosis, the evidence for the Ṛgvedic period presents us with a more complicated and dynamic situation than is normally given credit in which ritually active men promote martial and political expectations through rituals and participate in acts of aggression and violence outside of them. Āryan men thus engage in ritual, martial, and political fields in differing roles and to varying degrees. We can even imagine a case in which a man not only recites hymns to communicate masculine and martial values, but also affirms his commitment to them. This man may even be challenging his fellow ritual participants and brothers-in-arms to embody and act upon these androcentric expectations. Ṛgvedic rituals work then to reproduce such values by reproducing and sanctioning the actors who internalize and carry them out in ritual, social, martial, and political arenas. Consequently, throughout this work the terms "poet-priest," "warrior," and "chieftain" are not intended to signify

essentialized professions or repeat simplified observations about the class stratification of early Vedic society into poet-priests, on the one hand, and a noble aristocracy of warriors and rulers, on the other. These markers merely indicate ritual, martial, and political roles, functions, and identities that some Āryan men may have expressed, enacted, and even embodied in part or in full.

Women and Sexuality

Before summarizing the content of the chapters, it is important to make a brief note about women and femininity in the *Ṛgveda*. This book does not seek to examine the construction of femininity and the roles and place of women in ancient India, as this has already been successfully undertaken in two recent studies (Jamison 1996b; Kazzazi 2001).[63] Nevertheless, masculinity is a relational concept that is inevitably defined in contrast to femininity, and as such often posits the subjugation, neglect, or exclusion of women. In light of this, let me make some brief comments about the way in which men and women are portrayed in relation to each other in the *Ṛgveda*. Females are defined by a patriarchal and misogynist tradition that characterizes them as fickle or even dangerous and values them for their subservience, sexuality, and reproductivity. Ritual participants reinforce such values as men can fulfill their ritual and social responsibilities only by being married and having sons.[64] In addition, although some hymns are attributed to female poets, women are given little or no ritual responsibilities.[65] Only two female figures have developed characters and receive any real attention in the *Ṛgveda*. The first, the motherly goddess Pṛthivī ("Earth"), is defined primarily by her role as the wife of Father Sky (Dyaus Pitṛ). The second, the youthful goddess Uṣas ("Dawn"), drives away the darkness of the night when she entices the god Sun to rise. Her role is heavily ritualized as she may represent the first dawn of the New Year, and she also receives hymns and offerings in the early morning session of the *sóma* rite.[66] While these two venerated females are generally presented in a positive light, there are many examples of Indra's subjugation of heavenly and earthly realms, and an early poet praises Indra's violence against the goddess Dawn as a "virile/manly act" (*vīryà*) and also a "masculine" one at that (*paúṃsya*).[67] This also highlights the fact that such masculine terms carry sexual connotations. The noun *paúṃsya* ("masculinity") is closely associated with youthful vigor and sexual prowess,[68] especially the potency of a bull (*vṛ́ṣṇi*, *vṛ́ṣṇya*).[69] It is not surprising, then, that the archetypical man, Indra, is frequently called a bull and is said to be in possession of "1000 testicles, potent manhood" (ṚV.6.46.3c: *sáhasramuṣka túvinṛmṇa*). Likewise, an early poet juxtaposes a bull's semen

(*rétas*) with Indra's *vīryà*, and we note that the terms *vīrá* and *vīryà* are etymologically related to English "virile, virility" via Latin cognates.[70] We also note the sexual overtones of the noun *vīrá* ("virile/brave man; warrior") as Indra's divine henchmen, the Maruts, are called *vīrá-* when paired with "auspicious women/wives", one of whom provocatively wraps her arm around her chosen man.[71] At ṚV.10.86.9–10, in an explicitly sexual context, Indra's wife, Indrāṇī, rebukes the advances of the "bullish monkey" Vṛṣākapi and states that his overtures occur "as if I lacked a brave man" (9a: *avírām iva*). She twice affirms that she has a *vīrá* (9c, 10c: *vīríṇī*) and husband in Indra (9d, 10d: *índrapatnī*).[72] In a similar vein, the divine nymph Urvaśī says to her husband and lover Purūravas that as a *vīrá*, he is the chieftain (*rā́jan*) of her body.[73] A female poet, Śacī Paulomī, turns this sexual-cum-political metaphor on its head when she claims authority over her man and his tribesmen:

> ṚV.10.159.6: *sám ajaiṣam imā́ aháṃ sapátnīr abhibhū́varī, yáthāhám asyá vīrásya virā́jāni jánasya ca.*
>
> "I have utterly conquered them, being superior to the co-wives, so that I will rule over this brave man and his people."[74]

While this stanza comes from one of the few hymns attributed to a female poet, within the nexus of terms for masculinity, female figures often feature as an afterthought as the tradition appears to suppress the identity of women who have little or no role in Indra's battle for cosmic and terrestrial supremacy. To put it another way, poets are not directly concerned with defining masculinity in relation to women. In a very real sense, masculinity is defined by the absence of women, most likely because the terms for masculinity are embedded in a heavily ritualized patriarchal tradition that values physical power and liturgical authority, and women have no place in the serious business of socializing men for ritual performances and for war.

Summary of Chapters

Chapter 1 examines the use of common Ṛgvedic terms that denote "man" (*nár*) and "manhood, masculinity" (*nṛmṇá*, *paúṃsya*). It argues that through the use of these terms poet-priests communicate a dominant androcentric ideology to male ritual participants. One of the key ways that poet-priests do this is by closely aligning a man's identity with the gods Agni and Indra, who are themselves representative of manliness. Hence, ritual practitioners lay claim to what constitutes manhood through the performances of rituals, while defining just

how men should comport themselves in the ritual arena and in the world at large. In considering the ritualized construction of male identity, this chapter illuminates the relationship between the performance of early Vedic rituals and the ways in which such practices encode, reproduce, and legitimize the masculine identities of Āryan men. It demonstrates that a fundamental aspect of early Vedic life involves the sustained promotion and embodiment of what it means to be a true man, and the message of many of the more militant Ṛgvedic hymns conveys a code of violence to martially inclined men.

Chapter 2 examines in depth the use of the terms *vīrá* and *vīryà*, which signify a man's role as a brave warrior and his manly virile powers and qualities. Ṛgvedic poet-priests promote various ways that men can prove their masculinity, but the dominant role is that of man as warrior. Poets expect that men defined by the terms *vīrá* and *vīryà* will acquire wealth from violent excursions and will distribute the spoils among clansmen in the ritual arena. The use of these two terms also highlights the patriarchal nature of early Vedic culture as males are marked at birth with this androcentric martial role, while also being objectified as commodities in their own right. In addition, fathers, lords, and sacrificial patrons should possess and control males, whether young or old, and, through ritual performances, these patriarchal figures affirm their status, virility, and command of sons and able-bodied men. Through the use of these two terms, poets thus construct and reproduce not only a violent masculine role, but also a ritualized economy wherein material wealth, social standing, and fame are won or lost.

Chapter 3 argues that the term *śū́ra* ("big/strong man; champion") is far more specialized in use than has been previously recognized as it signifies a specific and expert martial and political role. As such, it designates the real hero of early Vedic ritual culture. The primary evidence for this relates to Indra's mythic battle with his archnemesis, the cosmic serpent Vṛtra, who in the human world represents the paradigmatic "enemy other" to Ṛgvedic social and political concerns. Furthermore, this chapter examines the notion of the *śū́ra's* "strength" (*śávas*) as the use of this term sheds considerable light on the role of the *śū́ra* and the meaning of Indra's battle with Vṛtra. This chapter thus explores the relationship between heroism, physical strength and size, cosmic expansion, control of natural resources, and the myth of Indra's destruction of the Vedic "dragon," Vṛtra.

To understand fully the construction of male identity in ancient India, chapter 4 examines a key strategy by which poets define and even control men's bodies. It focuses on the way that ritual practitioners strengthen the bodies of men, whether divine or human, through ritual praise (*stóma*) and drinking the sacred beverage *sóma*. A close study of the discursive representation of physical

strength (*ójas*) not only reveals the circumscribed way that Āryan men were supposed to understand and use their bodies, but also the way they embodied social and political ideals. Ritual practitioners thus naturalize the androcentric martial ideology by encoding it within a man's very sense of his physical self. The poetic construction of Indra's body highlights, then, a ritual strategy whereby poet-priests negotiate and control individuals and political realities while reproducing the importance and centrality of their ritual tradition. This chapter further suggests that a critical appreciation of the strengthening process raises theoretical issues about the nature of Ṛgvedic *sóma* rituals and the reason for their very existence.

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I

Manhood and Masculinity

In the *Ṛgveda*, two common terms denote "man," *nár* and *vīrá*, and the corresponding abstract nouns *nṛmṇá* and *vīryà*, as well as *paúṃsya*, signify the ideals of manhood.[1] This chapter will examine the use of the term *nár* and the near synonyms *nṛmṇá* ("manhood") and *paúṃsya* ("masculinity") to illuminate the relationship between the performance of early Vedic rituals and the complex ways in which such practices encode, reproduce, and legitimize the masculine identities of Āryan men.[2] From the outset, it is necessary to restate that masculinity is not a natural, fixed, or inevitable state; it is not inborn. As a social construct, masculinity is an embodied posture and projection. It is a performance in response to social, economic, and political pressures and ideologies. Hence, in exploring the ritualized construction of male identity, we will see that a fundamental aspect of early Vedic life involves the sustained promotion and embodiment of what it means to be a true man. The terms *vīrá* and *vīryà* will be examined extensively in the next chapter, but it would be helpful for our purposes here to briefly survey two recent studies of the terms *nár* and *vīrá*.

Kerstin Kazzazi is the first scholar to contrast the terms *nár* and *vīrá* in the *Ṛgveda*.[3] She argues (2001: 50–98) that the word *nár* refers to socially important, high-ranking men who possess spiritual-moral qualities and knowledge.[4] *Nár* thus designates predominantly priests, yet also sacrificers and warriors,[5] whereas *vīrá* most often refers to warriors and seldom to priests. A significant semantic

difference is that *nár* always appears in the plural in martial contexts, whereas *vīrá* can refer to a lone warrior (cf. ṚV.10.103.1c: *ekavīrá*), and Indra is obviously the paradigmatic *vīrá* (once being called *mahāvīrá* at ṚV.1.32.6b).

Kazzazi provides a basic survey of the morphology and semantic distribution of *nár* and *vīrá*. However, far more can be said regarding the social and political import of these terms. For example, as we will see, not only does Kazzazi overlook the fact that the role of a *vīrá* is embedded in a clear patriarchal hierarchy and consistently associated with wealth; she also overinterprets the evidence when she concludes that the term *nár* refers only to high-ranking Āryan men. We should restrain from reifying the term so as to avoid constructing a select class of males.[6]

In contrast to Kazzazi, Georges-Jean Pinault (2002a) argues that *nár* and *vīrá* (both "adult male") can be distinguished by their qualitative use in the *Ṛgveda*. *Nár* is a subjective term that signals highly valued male qualities, whereas *vīrá* designates a man in an objectified sense, especially as someone to be controlled or possessed. Though *nár* and *vīrá* correspond to each other, they are not synonyms. Both terms refer to sacrificers and masters of the house, but *nár* is predominantly applied to priests and *vīrá* to warriors. Pinault (201) rightly points out that Indra is at once the prototypical *nár* and *vīrá*. The two terms do not designate two different types of men, but signify two different, yet mutually overlapping, social roles expected of men. Ṛgvedic poets employ these terms to portray and define the identity of males in specific ways.

Like the ubiquitous English word "man," Vedic *nár* is straightforward in meaning. In most cases, it simply functions as the unmarked normative term for adult males. If the unmarked term is defined by what it seeks to suppress, then it is important to point out that of the 452 Ṛgvedic appearances of the term only a few ambiguous and late examples exist in which *nár* or its derivatives could apply to non-Āryan males, the indigenous *dā́sa* and *dásyu*.[7] This fact suggests that the term *nár* conveys specific androcentric and dominant cultural values pertaining to Āryan male identity. In the *Ṛgveda*, these values are almost exclusively socioeconomic, ritual, and martial. Since the abstract nouns *nṛmṇá* and *paúṃsya* equally signify such ideals, males are considered to be real men when they act according to defined social, ritual, and martial roles. I will examine each of these roles in more depth in the following sections.

The Ritual Fire

In a highly ritualized patriarchal society it is no surprise that men are the chief participants in ritual performances. As a matter of fact, early Vedic rituals are

almost exclusively performed by men, and for men, whether humans or gods.[8] The *Ṛgveda* is replete with examples; men prepare the ritual ground as servants of the gods (*devayánt-*),[9] recite sacred formulas,[10] and press *sóma* for Indra.[11] Ritual participation undoubtedly requires a high degree of knowledge and skill. This is highlighted in one stanza from a family book hymn in which men are called inspired poets motivated by insight, and they pay homage to a god with sacrifices and well-woven hymns.[12] Ṛgvedic poet-priests are also directly concerned with the maintenance and worship of the god Agni; that is, the deified ritual Fire. For example, three lines from family book hymns highlight the way in which men engage in key practices of kindling and tending the ritual Fire:

ṚV.5.11.2b: *agníṃ náras triṣadhasthé sám īdhire.*
"Men altogether kindled Fire in his three abodes."
ṚV.5.11.4b: *-agníṃ náro ví bharante gṛhégṛhe.*
"Men carry Fire out into house after house."
ṚV.7.16.3d: *sám agním indhate náraḥ.*
"Men altogether kindle Fire."

A late poet sums up the way in which men interact with their ritual Fire, while also highlighting the economics of ritual performances:

ṚV.1.70.10, to Agni: *ví tvā náraḥ purutrā́ saparyan pitúr ná jívrer ví védo bharanta.*

"In many places, men variously serve you. As if [in the manner] of an old ancestor, they distribute [their] property."

While these examples highlight the perfunctory and pragmatic nature of fire worship, other poets state that men should maintain a close personal relationship with their ritual Fire. Consider one stanza from the middle layer of the *Ṛgveda* in which a poet underscores the intimate nature of Fire's relationship with men:

ṚV.2.1.9: *tvā́m agne pitáram iṣṭíbhir náras tvā́m bhrātrā́ya śámyā tanūrúcam, tvám putró bhavasi yás té 'vidhat tváṃ sákhā suśévaḥ pāsy ādhṛ́ṣaḥ.*

"O Fire, as [their] father, men [come] to you with [their] desires; [they come] to you, blazing in body, for brotherhood with [their] ritual labor. You become a son to the one who offered worship to you. As a very favorable partner, you protect [him] from bold attack."

This poet emphasizes Agni's personification of representative masculine roles to such a degree that the ritual Fire is honored as a father, brother, son, and protecting companion. Late Ṛgvedic poets also stress Agni's personal and protective demeanor:

> ṚV.1.31.6ab: *tvám agne vṛjinávartaniṃ náraṃ sákman piparṣi vidáthe vicarṣaṇe.*
>
> "You, O Fire, guide the man whose course is crooked in partnership at the distribution ceremony, O unbounded one."
>
> ṚV.1.31.15ab: *tvám agne práyatadakṣiṇaṃ náraṃ vármeva syūtám pári pāsi viśvátaḥ.*
>
> "You, O Fire, protect all around the man whose sacrificial fee has been held forth, like armor that is stitched up."
>
> ṚV.1.73.4: *táṃ tvā náro dáma ā́ nítyam iddhám ágne sácanta kṣitíṣu dhruvā́su, ádhi dyumnáṃ ní dadhur bhū́ry asmin bhávā viśvā́yur dharúṇo rayīṇā́m.*
>
> "You are him, being kindled perpetually here in the home, O Fire, whom men follow among the enduring settlements. They established in him an abundant brilliance. Be, throughout [our] entire life the foundation of riches."

In the first hemistich, Agni appears to help navigate a man's progress in the distribution ceremony (*vidátha*).[13] In the second hemistich (from the same hymn as the first), Agni protects the same man "whose sacrificial fee has been held forth" (*práyatadakṣiṇam*). This compound most likely qualifies the sacrificer (*yájamāna*), who pays his poet-priest for his ritual services, and in turn the poet ensures that the ritual Fire's protection is as good as well-made armor. One late poet, however, provides another possible motivation for such payments: the men who pay the sacrificial fee do so to avoid the poet's contempt or derision.[14] This highlights a larger ritual strategy wherein poet-priests deride stingy or penurious patrons throughout the *Ṛgveda* and slander ritual participants if they do not reciprocate in the proper manner. In the third stanza, this economic ideology is embedded in ritual symbolism as men not only follow Agni but kindle him as the foundation of their prosperity (*dharúṇo rayīṇā́m*). These examples suggest, then, that a man's identity, especially his economic and social standing, is connected with the maintenance and worship of the ritual Fire. To put it another way, men maintain a practical and affectionate relation with their ritual Fire because

Agni benefits his male worshippers at ritual, socioeconomic, and political levels.[15]

Fire not only benefits men, but also symbolically embodies masculine ideals—indeed, Agni is called "best man among men" (*nṛ́ṇāṃ nṛ́tamaḥ*).[16] In an early stanza, certain individuals safeguard Agni's manhood (*nṛmṇá*), possibly with ritual offerings:

> ṚV.5.19.2: *juhuré ví citáyantó 'nimiṣaṃ nṛmṇám pānti, ā́ dṛḷhā́m púraṃ viviśuḥ.*
>
> "Watching, they have poured out [offerings]; unblinking, they protect [Agni's] manhood [*nṛmṇá*]. They entered the sturdy fort."

This stanza (and the hymn in which it appears) is filled with obscure imagery. The actors may be poet-priests performing the sacrifice, ritual objects such as the poured offerings themselves, or even abstract concepts. They are nonetheless "watching" or "mindful" (*citáyant*)[17] and "unblinking" (*ánimiṣam*) in their endeavors, as if care and attention is needed to look after Fire's manly nature, which the poet underscores by metaphorically calling him a "sturdy fort."[18] This also highlights the reciprocal nature of fire worship as Agni protects his male worshippers, and in turn they protect him.[19] A late poet depicts a similar image:

> ṚV.1.67.3-4: *háste dádhāno nṛmṇā́ víśvāny áme devā́n dhād gúhā niṣídan, vidántīm átra náro dhiyaṃdhā́ hṛdā́ yát taṣṭā́n mántrāṁ́ áśaṃsan.*
>
> "Holding all manly qualities [*nṛmṇá-*] in [his] hand, he [Agni] establishes the gods at [his] onslaught/sets the gods on the attack, when he sits down in secret. Men, establishing insight, find him there, when they recited formulas fashioned by the heart."[20]

Across both stanzas, the poet plays on the verb √*dhā* ("to establish, set in place; to hold, take; to assume"). First, Agni holds all forms of manhood (*nṛmṇā́ víśvāni*) in his hand, which perhaps refers figuratively to flames. Second, he establishes the other gods. The use of *áma* ("onslaught, attack") may refer to Fire's intensifying heat and light as a manifestation of his fiery power. If this is the case, then Agni summons the gods to the ritual ground when he blazes up, and this is perhaps why he is so manly.[21] On the other hand, in the preceding hymn, the same poet states that "like an army on the loose, (Agni) establishes an attack."[22] The term *áma* could also denote the power to cause such an attack or by metonymic extension the panic resulting from such an assault. This ambiguity appears in two cases where poets also use √*dhā* with locative

áme as Indra either causes Heaven and Earth or the communities to panic; sets them on the attack; or places them under the power of his attack.[23] In relation to the two stanzas cited above, it is unlikely that Agni terrifies the gods. It seems, rather, that Fire empowers his divine counterparts for battle, and thereby literally "sets the gods on the attack." Hence, on account of his manly qualities, Agni either summons the gods or prepares them for war when he secretly takes his own place on the ritual ground. Third, to find Agni, men follow suit by assuming the right frame of mind, so to speak, and by singing heartfelt formulas, which also highlights their affectionate relationship with the ritual Fire.[24] This poet thus suggests that Agni's primary ritual function to contact or empower other gods relates to the quality of his manhood. If my interpretation is correct, Agni's role in mediating other gods depends on his manly faculties, and perhaps male ritual participants equally need to embody masculine characteristics to be successful in their ritual endeavors and interactions with the gods.

The examples presented so far indicate that Agni symbolically embodies masculine ideals such as fatherhood, partnership, leadership, protection, and wealth, and that men interact with the ritual Fire for expedient and idealized reasons. In projecting such values onto Fire, poet-priests underscore the importance of such manly values for those who perform rituals. Poet-priests thus control the ritualized means to define what exactly is masculine, while asserting that men should maintain a devoted ritual relationship with Fire. This relationship is succinctly signified by Agni's title "lord of men" (*nṛpáti*)[25] and his frequent epithet "common to all men" or even "with power over all men" (*vaiśvānará*). Findly (1982: 17–18) qualifies this point:

> Because Agni belongs exclusively to the Aryans, possession of him, and as here of Vaiśvānara, becomes one of the most important characterizing marks of being Aryan and therefore a sign of divine election. Though born from the gods and kept by the Aryans, Vaiśvānara in turn has certain responsibilities towards his benefactors: as king of those descended from Manu, the first worshipping Aryan . . . , he must protect his folk . . . and, as a child of the gods, he must conquer their detractors and provide a peace broad enough for the proper performance of their ritual. Furthermore, in his role as warrior against the Dasyu, Vaiśvānara assumes many of the traits of Indra and . . . he is actually said to engage in combat—though this image may be more symbolic than real.[26]

In a similar vein, Proferes (2007) has argued that the ritual Fire acts as a powerful symbol of kinship, clan unity, tribal might, and political sovereignty

in Vedic culture. The symbolism of fire as a unifying entity is based on the fact that it exists in multiple places at once, yet its tangible and transferable nature allows it to be brought together into a singular form. From their own individual fires, various clans jointly kindle a single tribal fire, which represents the unified power of the chieftain and the support of his people. Moreover, communal clan fires signify kinship relationships, and their amalgamation into a chieftain's fire symbolizes the idealized power of his extensive polity and the clan's submission therein. Since Agni acts as a concrete symbol of political relationships, especially alliances and sovereignty, then Proferes (2007: 31) aptly concludes that the "control of fire is the equivalent of control over all levels of society." The ritual Fire is thus fundamental to the legitimation of Ṛgvedic ideology, and for this reason poet-priests work hard to ensure that Agni is a compelling and malleable symbol of Āryan sociopolitical relationships. At the microlevel of masculinity, Ṛgvedic poets envisage a reality wherein all Āryan men treat their ritual Fire as an honored man with whom they share personal androcentric ties. Such men emphasize the practical and affectionate relationship they should have with Agni, and in taking care of their ritual Fire they are able to demonstrate their manhood. Consequently, the ritual Fire constitutes a dominant medium through which male ritual participants can prove that they are real men, and while Agni is a potent symbol of the community and ultimately of the Ṛgvedic body politic, we can also see that through fire worship, Ṛgvedic poet-priests control the fiery means to define just exactly what kind of men clansmen and rulers should be.

The God of War

As we would expect, the war god Indra also symbolically represents and embodies masculine ideals. Agni and Indra not only share a symbiotic relationship in ritual and cosmic spheres, but also in terms of their exemplary manliness. In a stanza from the oldest layer, a poet highlights the importance of maintaining a relationship with Agni, while underscoring Indra's identity as the quintessential man:

> ṚV.4.25.4: *tásmā agnír bhárataḥ śárma yaṁsaj jyók paśyāt sū́ryam uccárantam, yá índrāya sunávāméty ā́ha náre náryāya nṛ́tamāya nṝṇā́m.*
>
> "As the descendant of Bharata, Fire will offer shelter to him. For a long time, he will see the rising sun, he who says, 'We will press [*sóma*] for Indra, for the manly man, best man among men.'"

The idiom "to see the sun" (here *sū́ryam √paś*; elsewhere *svàr √dṛ́ś*) figuratively signifies the value of being alive and well, while also expressing the *sóma* presser's desire to have an abundance of territory in which to roam (Oberlies 1998: 455–458). This prosperity depends on Agni's protection and the performance of *sóma* rituals for Indra, whom this poet defines in exceptional terms as "the manly man, best man among men" (*náre náryāya nṛ́tamāya nṛṇā́m*)—although, as we recall, Indra shares this superlative standing with Agni.[27] Though men interact with the ritual Fire, much of the ritual activity represented in the *Ṛ̊gveda* revolves around Indra. While gods such as Agni, Soma, the Maruts, and even the twin Aśvins are all defined in manly terms, it is only Indra in whom poets consistently encode all the various masculine ideals and roles—indeed, one poet states that Indra embodies "all masculine qualities" (*víśvāni paúṃsyā*).[28] In Indra, men worship the paradigmatic alpha male, the man par excellence. The poet of the great Indra hymn (ṚV.2.12) tersely depicts this androcentric ideology in his opening stanza:

> ṚV.2.12.1: *yó jātá evá prathamó mánasvān devó devā́n krátunā paryábhūṣat, yásya śúṣmād ródasī ábhyasetāṃ nṛmṇásya mahnā́ sá janāsa índraḥ.*
>
> "The god, who when just born with the foremost intellect, surrounded the gods due to [his] resolve. On account of whose ferocity the world halves were afraid [and] due to the greatness of [his] manhood [*nṛmṇá*]; he, O peoples, is Indra."

A poet from the final book depicts a similar image as strength, masculinity, and the mace are key elements of Indra's character:

> ṚV.10.22.3: *mahó yás pátiḥ śávaso ásāmy ā́ mahó nṛmṇásya tū́tujiḥ, bhartā́ vájrasya dhṛ́ṣṇóḥ pitā́ putrám iva priyám.*
>
> "The one who is the lord of great might [Indra], here [has made his might] complete. He is the advancer of great manhood [*nṛmṇá*], the bearer of the bold mace, like a father [bears] his beloved son."

Like Agni, Indra embodies and actively promotes manly ideals. We also note the parental metaphor as Indra cradles his signature weapon of war in the same way that a father cares for his son—it seems that just as it is true of a child, masculine ideals are in need of nurturing. Since the poet calls Indra the "advancer of great manhood," then he also implies that men need to follow their war god's example to embody and display their own masculine identities.[29]

Let us return to the oldest layer of the text, where a poet draws attention to the close ritual relationship men should share with Indra:

> ṚV.6.29.1: *índraṃ vo náraḥ sakhyā́ya sepur mahó yántaḥ sumatáye cakānā́ḥ, mahó hí dātā́ vájrahasto ásti mahā́m u raṇvám ávase yajadhvam.*
>
> "For you all, men offered their services to Indra for [his] partnership, traveling desirously to the great one's good will. For he, mace in hand, is a giver of the great. Offer sacrifice to the great and pleasurable one for [his] help."

Since his address is directed toward sacrificial patrons,[30] the poet insinuates that all men involved in the ritual performance should maintain a beneficial relationship with Indra. The poet expands on the image of Indra holding his mace in the next stanza with a line that places manly qualities in the war god's hand:

> ṚV.6.29.2a: *ā́ yásmin háste náryā mimikṣúr.*
>
> "Here in whose hand manly things have been joined."[31]

Since Agni holds all manly qualities in hand,[32] it is apt that all things manly also reside in Indra's hand. In this context, it is noteworthy that Indra's arch-enemy, the cosmic serpent Vṛtra, is explicitly called "handless" (*ahastá*).[33] While this is an appropriate description of a snake, it may also be a metaphor for Vṛtra's lack of manly qualities. Moreover, as we will see in chapter 4, Indra's arms not only point to his raw physical power and mace wielding ability; they also signify his duty to wage war for profit and his position of cosmic supremacy. This is evident in the first stanza as the poet calls Indra the "giver of the great" (1c: *mahó hí dātā́*) when he holds his mace, and he also plays on Indra's warlike physical prowess and wealth-generating exploits in a line from the third stanza:

> ṚV.6.29.3b: *dhṛṣṇúr vajrí śávasā dákṣiṇāvān.*
>
> "The daring mace wielder brings sacrificial rewards due to [his] might."

The poet's choice of words implies that Indra acquires sacrificial rewards (perhaps cattle) through a show of force. In the closing hemistich of the fourth stanza, the poet returns to the reason why he and his fellow poet-priests ritually invoke Indra:

ṚV.6.29.4cd: *índraṃ nára stuvánto brahmakārā́ ukthā́ śáṃsanto devávātatamāḥ.*

"As makers of sacred formulations, men are praising Indra and eulogizing [their] recitations as the best of those close to the god."[34]

In the opening stanzas of his hymn, this early poet sings the importance of Indra's companionship, masculinity, physical power, and generosity—all of which underscore his role as the war god. The poet thus articulates one of the core Ṛgvedic ideals that men should maintain a close ritual relationship with Indra, and this is because the war god is so manly, tough, and generous. What is more, the poet implies that for men to do this, they must be skilled ritualists who are knowledgeable, devoted, and possess the ability to please Indra with hymns.

Other poets make similar statements about the importance of Indra's companionship, protection, and his ability to generate wealth from martial excursions. These ideals were important to book 3 Viśvāmitra poets as they close many hymns with a stanza[35] that underscores Indra's manly character, generosity, and martial abilities:

ṚV.3.30.22: *śunáṃ huvema maghávānam índram asmín bhára nṛ́tamaṃ vā́jasātau, śṛ́ṇvántam ugrám ūtáye samátsu ghnántaṃ vṛ́trāṇi saṃjítaṃ dhánānām.*

"For success, we would invoke munificent Indra in this [cattle] raid, the best man in the winning of prizes; him who listens, powerful for help in battles, smashing obstacles, victor of stakes."

For this poetic family, Indra is literally the "best man" (*nṛ́tama*) for the job of defeating enemies and capturing cattle for distribution. And we note, the plural of *vṛ́trá* ("obstacle") can refer to human adversaries, rather than just the cosmic serpent. This stanza thus highlights the close relationship between myth, ritual, masculinity, and a violent economy while implying that human victories are only possible on account of Indra's presence. In this vein, another family book poet suggests that ritual participants should maintain an intimate relationship with Indra because the war god protects them, and we note his title "munificent one" (voc. *maghavan*):

ṚV.7.19.8ab, to Indra: *priyā́sa ít te maghavann abhíṣṭau náro madema śaraṇé sákhāyaḥ.*

"Beloved indeed to you, O munificent one, may we men be elated in [your] superiority, in [your] protection, as [your] partners."

Superiority, protection, generosity, and loyal partnership are thus key elements of Indra's manly character.[36] To be sure, a late poet explicitly demands Indra's protection, while correlating this with the god's political standing as a chieftain (*rā́jan*):

> ṚV.1.174.1ab: *tváṃ rā́jendra yé ca devā́ rákṣā nṛ́n pāhy àsura tvám asmā́n.*
>
> "As chieftain, O Indra, in conjunction with those who are gods, guard men! Protect us, O Asura."

This hemistich underscores the reciprocal relationship male worshippers share with Indra; although, unlike the case with Agni, men do not protect Indra but ritually offer him praise, oblations, and, most important, *sóma* as their part of the deal. If we extrapolate this to the human world, then protection is presumably a key ideal that human rulers were supposed to prioritize. The notion that men should seek protection and generosity from Agni and Indra also parallels the ideal relationship shared among men as ritual patrons (*sūrí-*) are frequently defined in terms of their largesse,[37] while also being called protectors of men (*nṛpātṛ́-*).[38] In the same vein as Agni, these examples thus highlight the reciprocal ritual relationship men share with Indra, and the way in which they encode in him physical, masculine, economic, and martial-political ideals, which are all representative of human expectations and behavior. A late poet succinctly captures this relationship and these values in two lines devoted to the war god:

> ṚV.1.100.8ab: *tám apsanta śávasa utsavéṣu náro náram ávase táṃ dhánāya.*
>
> "Men inspired this man [Indra] in [his] outbursts of might for help, for wealth."[39]

Let us change tack and consider another way in which men benefit from their reciprocal relationship with Indra. Just as we saw with Fire, men demonstrate their masculinity by ritually interacting with the war god. To highlight this, it is important to know that Ṛgvedic poet-priests frequently configure ritual acts in martial terms. For example, a late poet explicitly compares himself to Indra when he defeats enemies in what may be a verbal contest:

> ṚV.10.166.2-3: *ahám asmi sapatnahéndra ivā́riṣṭo ákṣataḥ, adhā́ḥ sapátnā me padór imé sárve abhíṣṭhitāḥ. átraivá vó 'pi nahyāmy ubhé ā́rtnī iva jyáyā, vā́cas pate ní ṣedhemā́n yáthā mád ádharaṃ vádān.*

> "I am the smasher of rivals, unharmed and uninjured like Indra. Under my feet are the rivals, every one of them is stood upon. I bind you all right here like both ends of a bow with string. O lord of speech, force them down so that they will speak from beneath me."

Kuiper (1960: 252) states that the speaker here has won a debate against rival poets.[40] In a similar vein, Oberlies (1998: 412) conjectures that with hymns as weapons, the poet is victorious in some form of battle, though he does not say whether this is a verbal contest between poets or ritualized combat against cosmic or human enemies. To highlight this latter scenario, an early poet states that Bṛhaspati, the "Lord of the Sacred Formulation" or *bráhman*, destroys enemies with his chants (*arká-*).[41] Indeed, the way in which Āryan men mythologize the martial potency of their rituals is nowhere more evident than in the acts of Bṛhaspati and the archetypical poet-priests, the Aṅgirases, who directly aid Indra with their powerful hymns when the war god smashes open the cosmic mountain to free the cows and the sun (see Schmidt 1968). This myth constitutes a key discursive strategy wherein Ṛgvedic ritualists make their ritual performances an intrinsic component of the technology of battle. There are also numerous examples in which ritual practitioners strengthen (*√vṛdh*) their "sacred formulations" (*bráhman-*) and qualify them as "strengthening" (*várdhana*).[42] For this reason, Ṛgvedic poet-priests repeatedly assert that ritual speech carries its own power and force, which either empowers Indra, among other gods, or independently destroys obstacles and defeats enemies. Ritual practitioners thus present themselves as effective, formidable, and even dangerous because of the power of their ritualized discourse. This constitutes one of the ways that poet-priests underscore the efficacy of their ritual performances, while legitimizing the ritualized way that they assist Indra in his cattle raids and battles. In this vein, an early poet states that men free cattle through their "divine speech," and the context here may be the Vala myth.[43] The idea here may be that through hymns, poets summon Indra to rescue the cows,[44] but it could also be the case that their speech is the actual instrument of release. It is noteworthy then that a middle-layer poet states that Indra's masculinity is worthy of praise when he frees cattle for the Aṅgiras poet-priests:

> ṚV.8.63.3, to Indra: *sá vidvā́m̐ áṅgirobhya índro gā́ avṛṇod ápa, stuṣé tád asya paúṃsyam.*
>
> "Knowing, he uncovered the cows for the Aṅgirases. This masculine act [*paúṃsya*] of his is to be praised."

Since cattle raiding is manly, whether in the cosmic or human realm, then poets presumably act in a manly way when they free cattle with their ritual speech, albeit in an auxiliary role. Moreover, in configuring liturgical poetry as powerful and destructive and in conceptualizing ritual performances as crucial for success in battle, ritual practitioners are all the more able to define themselves in masculine and even martial terms.

Other poets certainly describe their ritual activity in masculine terms. Consider a book 9 hemistich where a poet offers Indra "recitations" (*ukthá-*), and these are placed in apposition to masculine properties (*paúṃsya-*):

> ṚV.9.111.3de: *ágmann ukthā́ni paúṃsyéndraṃ jaítrāya harṣayan.*
>
> "Recitations, masculine acts/qualities [*paúṃsya-*], have gone [to him]: They aroused Indra to victory."[45]

The exact intent of the poet's juxtaposition of *ukthá* and *paúṃsya* in the plural is unclear. We note, though, that this poet-priest supports his war god in battle with a ritual performance, and his liturgy encourages Indra to act violently. The recitations perhaps remind Indra of his masculine duty to fight or may even transmit manly powers to the war god to help him in battle. In the same vein as the above examples, this ritual practitioner thus makes his ritual performance an intrinsic part of the technology of war. In saying this, we see elsewhere that masculinity is first and foremost performed as poets use the verb √*kṛ* ("to do, perform; to make") with the terms *nṛmṇá*, *paúṃsya*, and *vīryà*.[46] Consider two examples from the oldest and middle layers:

> ṚV.4.32.11: *tā́ te gṛṇanti vedháso yā́ni cakártha paúṃsyā, sutéṣv indra girvaṇaḥ.*
>
> "Ritual experts sing about those masculine acts [*paúṃsya-*] of yours which you performed, in the [*sóma*] pressings, O Indra who longs for songs."
>
> ṚV.8.66.9ab: *kád ū nv àsyā́kṛtam índrasyāsti paúṃsyam.*
>
> "What masculine act [*paúṃsya*] is there now that has not been performed by this one, by Indra?"

The second poet suggests that Indra sets the standards of male behavior: if something is manly, then Indra has done it. Since masculinity is performed, then at ṚV.9.111.3de (cited above) the poet may be acknowledging his manly activity when he sings his recitations. If this is the case, then the poet affirms his manliness and that of his war god through a ritual performance. Consider

then a poet from the final layer who articulates a conversation between Indra and his loyal band of warriors, the Maruts. In one stanza they inform the war god:

> ṚV.1.165.7: *bhū́ri cakartha yújyebhir asmé samānébhir vṛṣabha paúṃsyebhiḥ, bhū́rīṇi hí kṛṇávāmā śaviṣṭhéndra krátvā maruto yád váśāma.*
>
> "'You did many things with us as yokemates, with [our] united masculine qualities [*paúṃsya-*], O bull. Indeed, we will do many things, O mightiest Indra, according to [our or your] resolve, if we—the Maruts!—will wish it.'"

The Maruts here explicitly affirm their commitment to martial acts in conjunction with Indra. They also seem to be deliberately connecting their manly powers with Indra's, and we note they claim some form of authority over this relationship. This stanza may point to several interconnected ritual practices. First, throughout the *Ṛgveda*, the Maruts not only act as warriors and fight alongside Indra in battle; they also frequently perform ritual acts such as praising Indra.[47] In this case, it seems that the Maruts are acting in a poetic role so as to strengthen Indra by uniting their masculine attributes with him. Their example may indicate that human warriors sing Indra's praises in the ritual arena to partner themselves with their war god before battle and to affirm their own manly identities. It may also be the case that the actual speaker of this stanza is demonstrating his own manly identity by enacting the roles of the Maruts in the ritual. As a matter of fact, throughout the whole hymn the poet alternates between Indra and the Maruts as they reconcile their differences in an argument over sacrificial rights—what could be manlier than ritually performing and mediating an argument between the war god and his powerful soldiers?[48]

Other poets confirm that it is manly to perform rituals. For example, an early poet aligns the Maruts' poetic acts (*kā́vya-*) with masculine qualities or deeds (*paúṃsya-*).[49] In a similar vein, another poet states that as a "poet" (*kaví*), Soma clothes himself in all things poetic (*kā́vya-*) when he seeks the Sun, and such things are appositionally qualified as manly (*nṛmṇá-*).[50] According to Brereton (2004: 333–337), the term *kaví* ("poet, sage") does not refer to a specific ritual role, but to the anticipated character of a "house lord" (*gṛhápati*) or "clan lord" (*viśpáti*). Not only can a poet-priest be called a *kaví*, but the term also extends to sacrificers and chieftains, who should know hidden, secret, and true things in ritual performances. Consequently, the term *kā́vya* denotes a form of specialized ritual knowledge. Since it is twice juxtaposed with masculine concepts, the sagacious poetic activity of the Maruts and Soma also attests their

manliness. We can thus conclude from all these examples—the poetic activity of the man who inspires Indra to victory (ṚV.9.111.3de), the warlike Maruts and the poet who plays their part, the warriors who seek to unite their manly qualities with Indra's, Soma, and perhaps all the individuals claiming sagelike status—that whether poet, priest, or warrior, men demonstrate their masculinity by performing rituals.

The point here is that poet-priests not only encode masculine ideals in gods such as Agni, Soma, and Indra, but, in performing sacrifices, ritually active men also display their own manhood. Let us consider another early stanza to Indra:

> ṚV.5.38.4: *utó no asyá kásya cid dákṣasya táva vṛtrahan, asmábhyaṃ nṛmṇám ā́ bharāsmábhyaṃ nṛmaṇasyase.*
>
> "And [you rule] over this [sacrificial] skill of ours, whatever it be—[it is] yours, O Vṛtra smasher. For us bring manhood [*nṛmṇá*] here, [since] for us you have your mind on men."

While the exact meaning of this stanza is unclear,[51] the term *dákṣa* denotes a particular skill, often in relationship to sacrificial aptitude. Its use here suggests that Indra controls the outcomes and benefits of this ritual performance. Since the poet instructs Indra to bring (*ā́ √bhṛ*) manhood to fellow ritual participants, then the term *nṛmṇá* could stand metaphorically for Indra's victory in battle or for captured wealth. On the other hand, we recall that Indra is the "advancer of great manhood" and "in control of the foundations of great manhood."[52] In light of this, the idea here is more likely that poet-priests prove their manhood by summoning the war god. This is presumably what lies behind the poet's coining of the hapax denominative verb *√nṛmaṇasy* ("to think of, be kind to men"), which underscores Indra's androcentric focus on his male worshippers and the way in which he confirms their excellence in performing rituals.[53] In saying this, we should not forget that there is an inherent strategy here as poet-priests are the very individuals who make Indra responsible for confirming their ritual activity as manly.

Finally, a nonfamily book poet from the middle layer states that ritual praises strengthen (*√vṛdh*) Indra so that the war god will be generous and manly:

> ṚV.8.2.29: *stútaś ca yā́s tvā várdhanti mahé rā́dhase nṛmṇā́ya, índra kāríṇaṃ vṛdhántaḥ.*
>
> "And the praises which strengthen you for great generosity, for manhood [*nṛmṇá*], O Indra, are strengthening the victory-singer."

The common masculine metaphor of strengthening not only signals the way in which the poet-priests ritually empower Indra, but also underscores the way in which they construct and display their physical relationship with gods. In juxtaposing *nṛmṇá* and *mahí rā́dhas* ("great generosity"), the poet perhaps aligns manliness and largesse to remind Indra that a real man gives wealth. If the poet is himself the "victory-singer" (*kārín*), then he seems to enhance his own male identity and financial well-being by ritually interacting with Indra. This suggests that the poet-priest displays his masculinity performatively, while also challenging his war god to share wealth by making generosity an intrinsic component of Indra's very identity as a man. It is obviously in the best interest of poet-priests to sing about Indra's strong manly nature and acts of generosity because this all the more affirms their own masculinity and enhances their position as recipients of Indra's generosity.

To sum up this section, like Agni, ritual practitioners deploy Indra to define masculinity in terms of ritual devotion, poetic knowledge, and liturgical power; in terms of martial characteristics such as strength, protection, and victory; and in terms of wealth and generosity. It is through manly gods such as Indra that the Ṛgvedic ritual tradition provides Āryan men with a set of masculine values and roles. While these ideals may represent separate arenas in which men can display their manliness, it is important to restate that Indra embodies and performs all of them as if men in ancient India have little choice but to embrace all aspects of the dominant androcentric ideology at once or at least to try. The image of the ideal Āryan male is one who possesses wealth and offspring, generosity, hospitality, knowledge, ritual devotion, liturgical power, a strong physique, and a tough demeanor. Moreover, Ṛgvedic poet-priests affirm their masculinity and characterize their efforts to gain wealth, prosperity, and security in terms of struggle and opposition, whether or not such things are gained through actual cattle raiding or warfare. Early Vedic rituals are thus defined by a rhetoric of conflict and competition predicated on and embedded in ritualized systems of reciprocity, socioeconomic capital, and masculinity. This will become all the more evident in the following section.

Masculinity and Violence

This brings us to the final issue we need to consider in this chapter. It perhaps goes without saying that because Indra is the god of war, battle defines his very raison d'être. Throughout the rest of this section and the following chapters, we will see that poet-priests repeatedly correlate all things masculine with all

things martial. Though performing rituals is manly, it is equally manly to fight. A late poet best expresses this value when he states of Indra:

> ṚV.10.113.4b: *práparśyad vīró abhí paúṃsyaṃ ráṇam.*
>
> "The brave man [*vīrá*] looked forward to [his] masculine act [*paúṃsya*], to battle."[54]

The precedent for this statement appears in the oldest layer as an early poet articulates the relationship between masculinity, violence, and physical strength in a stanza to Indra:

> ṚV.4.22.9: *asmé várṣiṣṭhā kṛṇuhi jyéṣṭhā nṛmṇáni satrā́ sahure sáhāṃsi, asmábhyaṃ vṛtrā́ suhánāni randhi jahí vádhar vanúṣo mártyasya.*
>
> "Among us perform [your] highest, most excellent manly acts [*nṛmṇá-*], thoroughly [exercise your] dominating powers, O dominating one. Make well-smashed obstacles subject to us. Smash the deadly weapon of the covetous mortal."

Other poets praise the war god for his ability to conquer rival males, and this masculine trait is particularly encapsulated in the compound "dominating men" (*nṛṣáh, nṛṣā́hya*). For example, a poet from the middle layer glorifies Indra's standing as a powerful man, benefactor, and ruler:

> ṚV.8.16.1: *prá samrā́jaṃ carṣaṇīnā́m índraṃ stotā návyaṃ gīrbhíḥ, náraṃ nṛṣā́ham máṃhiṣṭham.*
>
> "With songs praise forth Indra anew, the sovereign ruler of boundary peoples, the man that dominates men, the most munificent."

Consider another poet from the final layer of the text:

> ṚV.10.38.4: *yó dabhrébhir hávyo yáś ca bhū́ribhir yó abhíke varivovín nṛṣā́hye, táṃ vikhādé sásnim adyá śrutáṃ náram arvā́ñcam índram ávase karāmahe.*
>
> "The one who is to be invoked by the few and who [is to be invoked] by the many; who gains wide space at the encounter, at the dominating of men: Him, winning in the grind [of battle] today, the famed man, Indra will we make head toward us for help."[55]

We see then that conquest and the subjugation of rival men in battle defines a dominant aspect of Indra's standing as a man. In this vein, in a hemistich

from the middle layer, ritual participants lay claim to Indra's masculine nature because they want victory:

> ṚV.8.95.6cd: *purū́ṇy asya paúṃsyā síṣāsanto vanāmahe.*
>
> "Striving to win, we will covet his many masculine qualities [*paúṃsya-*]."

In a similar direct fashion, a late poet makes the following request of Indra:

> ṚV.10.59.3a: *abhí ṣv àryáḥ paúṃsyair bhavema.*
>
> "May we overcome strangers due to masculine qualities [*paúṃsya-*]."

It is unclear here whether the masculine characteristics belong to Indra or the poets, but perhaps the ambiguity is intentional as both Indra and the ritual participants jointly exercise their manly powers to overcome (*abhí √bhū*) "strangers" (*arí-*). The term *arí* denotes an outsider to the poet's community, yet he still appears to be identifiable as a fellow Āryan, a compatriot of sorts.[56] Thus poets encourage the defeat of rival men from the wider early Vedic cultural milieu. Consider another line from a late poet:

> ṚV.10.76.2c: *vidád dhy àryó abhíbhūti paúṃsyam.*
>
> "Indeed, he finds masculinity [*paúṃsya*] that overcomes a stranger."

The subject of this line is a ritual participant who presses *sóma* with stones (or perhaps the stones themselves). If he acquires *paúṃsya* for himself, then in preparing *sóma*, this ritual participant proves his own masculinity, which is anticipated to overcome (*abhíbhūti*) a rival Āryan. On the other hand, the term *paúṃsya* could stand synecdochically for Indra, and thus the poet-priest summons the war god to the ritual so that he can drink *sóma* and conquer enemies. The poet may even imply both interpretations at the same time. If this is the case then this poet embraces the overlapping ritual and martial expressions of early Vedic masculinity for his own benefit.

In a related context, a family book poet introduces the idea that Indra and other figures deprive rival Āryans of their manhood:

> ṚV.7.48.3: *té cid dhí pūrvír abhí sánti śā́sā víśvāṁ aryá uparátāti vanvan, índro víbhvāṁ ṛbhukṣā́ vā́jo aryáḥ śátror mithatyā́ kṛṇavan ví nṛ́mṇám.*

> "Indeed, they surely are superior to many [commands] through [their] command. They vanquished all strangers in [their] quest for ascendancy. Indra, Vibhvan, Ṛbhukṣan, and Vāja will do away with the manhood [*nṛmṇá*] of both stranger and an enemy by opposing it."[57]

In the final book of the *Ṛgveda*, a poet broadens this idea to include non-Āryans when he speaks for Indra:

> ṚV.10.48.2: *ahám índro ródho vákṣo átharvaṇas tritā́ya gā́ ajanayam áher ádhi, aháṃ dásyubhyaḥ pári nṛmṇám ā́ dade gotrā́ śíkṣan dadhīcé mātaríśvane.*
>
> "'I, Indra, am the barrier, the breastplate of the Atharvan. For Trita I produced forth the cows from the serpent. I take away manhood [*nṛmṇá*] from the barbarians, directing my effort to the cow pens for Dadhyañc and Mātariśvan.'"

This is the only time a Ṛgvedic poet ascribes *nṛmṇá* to non-Vedic individuals.[58] We also recall that no poet ever explicitly calls the indigenous peoples "men" (*nár-*). The poet perhaps attributes *nṛmṇá* to the Dasyu because a sign of manhood is the ownership of cattle, and in this case it is unmanly to have one's cows stolen. Elsewhere, a man does perform manly acts (*nṛmṇá-*) while protecting his cattle.[59] In a more violent manner, *nṛmṇá* could here be a metaphor for life—this appears to be the case with the preceding example. Moreover, in speaking for Indra and trumpeting his own martial prowess, the poet may be bolstering his own masculine identity, and while it could merely be a performative display of manly virtue, he may also be signaling his involvement in an actual cattle raid. We once again see the overlapping ways in which men can embrace and perform the hegemonic form of masculinity, and the way in which manhood can equally manifest in the ritual arena and in battle.

Let us return to the oldest layer of the *Ṛgveda*, in which several poets sing about Indra's manly character in terms of generosity and violence:

> ṚV.4.16.16: *tám íd va índraṃ suhávaṃ huvema yás tā́ cakā́ra náryā purū́ṇi, yó mā́vate jaritré gádhyaṃ cin makṣú vā́jam bhárati spārhárādhāḥ.*
>
> "For you all, we would invoke just him, Indra, easy to invoke, who has done these many manly things, who of desirable generosity promptly brings to a singer such as me a prize to be captured (in battle)."

ṚV.6.44.4: *tyám u vo áprahaṇaṃ gṛṇīṣé śávasas pátim, índraṃ viśvāsā́haṃ náram máṃhiṣṭhaṃ viśvácarṣaṇim.*

"And, for you all, I sing to the lord of might, who does not knock us out, to Indra, dominating all, the man, most munificent who belongs to all boundary peoples."

Like previous examples, these poets connect manliness with economic and martial realities. While we will consider this issue in more depth in the next chapter, poet-priests repeatedly praise Indra for his generosity while instructing him to distribute wealth among ritual participants and presumably the community at large. In addition, many of the examples presented so far indicate that one of the dominant ways in which wealth is acquired in early Vedic culture is through cattle raiding and warfare. Ṛgvedic poets thus embed the concept of masculinity within a violent ritualized economy. Consider then the following stanza:

ṚV.7.30.1: *ā́ no deva śávasā yāhi śuṣmin bhávā vṛdhá indra rāyó asyá, mahé nṛmṇā́ya nṛpate suvajra máhi kṣatrā́ya paúṃsyāya śūra.*

"O ferocious god, travel here to us with [your] might. O Indra, be present in order to increase this wealth. O lord of men with the excellent mace, [be present] for great manhood [*nṛmṇá*], for great dominion, for masculinity [*paúṃsya*], O champion."

This poet focuses on the importance of Indra's physical power so that the war god will "increase/strengthen" (√*vṛdh*) his wealth. He also appears to ask the war god to manifest himself so as to attest his superior manliness and dominance, and we note Indra's status as a mace-wielding "lord of men" (voc. *nṛpate*). Since Indra's identity as a man corresponds to his position of political and territorial rule (*máhi kṣatrá*), this suggests that masculinity, violence, political standing, and economic success are closely related values that poet-priests expect of Indra and, presumably, of human warriors and chieftains.

In closing this section, it is important to point out that Ṛgvedic poets reproduce many of the same masculine themes and ideals in the final layer of the *Ṛgveda*—often in summary form as if to reinforce such values. For example, a late poet begins his hymn with three stanzas that highlight many of the issues considered so far. The hymn opens with the following stanza:

ṚV.10.50.1: *prá vo mahé mándamānāyā́ndhasó 'rcā viśvā́narāya viśvābhúve, índrasya yásya súmakhaṃ sáho máhi śrávo nṛmṇáṃ ca ródasī saparyátaḥ.*

> "Chant forth to the great one who, for you all, is becoming exhilarated on the [*sóma*] plant, to the one common to all men, to the one who belongs to all. The world halves revere Indra's very energetic, great dominating strength, fame, and manhood [*nṛmṇá*]."[60]

For this poet, either the dual deities Heaven and Earth or the goddess Rodasī herself ("world halves") praise Indra on account of his conquering strength (*sáhas*), fame (*śrávas*), and manhood (*nṛmṇá*); physical strength, social standing, and masculinity are closely aligned ideals. The hymn continues:

> ṚV.10.50.2: *só cin nú sákhyā nárya iná stutáś carkṛ́tya índro mā́vate náre, víśvāsu dhūrṣú vājakṛ́tyeṣu satpate vṛtré vāpsv àbhí śūra mandase.*
>
> "And certainly now with him as [our] partner the manly staunch one is praised. Indra is to be constantly celebrated for one like me, for a man. In all (things relating to) chariot poles, in quests for the prize, O settlement lord, or when [you] confront Vṛtra among the waters, O champion, you become exhilarated."[61]

Like earlier poets, this late poet praises Indra for his partnership, manliness, success in capturing spoils, and defeat of Vṛtra. He also states that Indra is praised for the very fact that the god, like his poet, is a man. Hence, on account of his close relationship with Indra, this poet is able to call attention to his own masculine identity. The poet amplifies these issues in the third stanza of his hymn:

> ṚV.10.50.3: *ké té nára indra yé ta iṣé yé te sumnáṃ sadhanyàm íyakṣān, ké te vā́jāyāsuryà̀ya hinvire ké apsú svā́sūrvárāsu paúṃsye.*
>
> "Who are these men, O Indra, who [exist] for your wish, who will strive to obtain your grace, [your] companionship? Which [men] impel themselves to your lordly prize? Which [men turn to you] in matters relating to waters, their own fertile fields, or masculinity [*paúṃsya*]?"[62]

As Geldner (1951, 3: 211) states, the answer to this poet's question is "We are those men!" For this reason, the poet speaks for his fellow ritual participants, who seek Indra's generosity, protection, and partnership. Since Indra's benevolence and camaraderie continue to be central issues for this late poet, he ensures that his clansmen turn to Indra for help when it comes to securing waters and fertile grazing fields, and in exercising their own masculinity. The poet's correlation of such values suggests that a measure of a man's worth

relates to his control of natural resources as a necessity of living a pastoral life. It also seems that cattle raids and war constitute principal arenas for proving one's masculinity. Whether ritualized or actual, competition and conflict thus play a substantial role in defining the identities of men in early Vedic culture, and this reality is intrinsically connected with the clear reciprocal exchange of wealth, among other forms of capital.

Conclusion

The evidence presented in this chapter strongly suggests that Ṛgvedic rituals were performed to construct and legitimize the identities of men, whether divine or human, and poet-priests reproduce such ritualized practices across all layers of the text. More specifically, the concepts *nṛmṇá* and *paúṃsya* signify masculine ideals and roles of a ritual tradition directly concerned with ritual participation, economic prosperity, liturgical authority, martial activity, political standing, and the identity and well-being of men (*nár-*). By ritually interacting with gods, ritual practitioners lay claim to what constitutes manhood, what it means to be a man. They map masculine ideals onto gods, principally Agni and Indra, because this allows them to mediate such abstract ideological projections of Āryan maleness, while defining just how men should comport themselves in the ritual arena and in the world at large. Consequently, Ṛgvedic ritual practitioners deploy Agni and Indra to create various avenues in which Āryan men can affirm their own masculinity, whether it be in ritual performances, in social and economic interactions, or in real world conflict and competition. However, while the use of *nár*, *nṛmṇá*, and *paúṃsya* presents us with a well-rounded image of the various ways in which a man can attest his manhood in ancient India, given the examples of Agni and Indra, the dominant masculine ideology expects that Āryan men will embrace and even perform all manly ideals at once. Manhood in ancient India is therefore defined by a overlapping set of socioeconomic, ritual, and martial values and practices such as a man's ritualized interactions with the ritual Fire and the war god (among other gods); by his ritual aptitude, poetic skill, and verbal power; by his physical strength and ability to provide protection and companionship; by the level of his wealth and generosity; and also by his prowess in martial excursions and ultimately his social and political standing. It is manly to participate in rituals, to sing hymns, to share wealth, to have children, to offer protection, and to fight, among other activities, and Āryan men perform and legitimize their masculinity in the ritual arena and in the wider world by associating themselves with gods, especially Agni and Indra. The repeated association of masculine ideals with poetic,

priestly, and warrior roles suggests that the men who perform rituals not only accept such roles as legitimate and normative but also enact them to varying degrees.

Through the use of *nṛmṇá* and *paúṃsya*, Ṛgvedic poet-priests thus communicate an androcentric ideology to male ritual participants, and this is particularly true in the case of the sacrificer, and by extension lords and chieftains, as their identities are closely aligned with Agni and Indra. Since Agni and Indra exhibit such strong masculine stereotypes, early Vedic men may have conformed to such representative roles to keep in line with the gods' image. If gods are ideally what human men should be, then the message of many of the more militant Ṛgvedic hymns conveys a code of violence to martially inclined men. We will see this ideal explicitly articulated in the next chapter.

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2

Brave Men and Manliness

To understand Ṛgvedic attitudes toward masculinity in more depth, we must grasp the subtleties of the terms *vīrá* and *vīryà*, and this chapter is devoted to the meaning and usage of these words. The concrete noun *vīrá* typically designates a fit strong male who routinely fights in battle, and its derived abstract noun, *vīryà*, signifies his manly qualities and martial exploits. Ṛgvedic poets promote various ways in which men can prove their masculinity, but the principal role is that of man as warrior. Like *nṛmṇá* and *paúṃsya*, the terms *vīrá* and *vīryà* are deployed by poets to construct a dominant masculine ideology, which they encode primarily in Indra for symbolic, economic, and political ends. As we will see, ritual practitioners expect that men defined by the terms *vīrá* and *vīryà* will acquire wealth from violent excursions and distribute the spoils among clansmen during ritual performances. In return for their courageous feats, poet-priests fame such men. Through the use of these two terms, ritual participants thus create and reproduce not only a core masculine role, but also a ritualized economy involving the exchange of material and symbolic capital, including healthy strong males, who are defined as commodities in their own right. Furthermore, the ritualized exchange of different forms of capital allows us to speculate about some of the social and political relationships and factors that position a man within his tribe and justify his masculine identity.

The Sanskrit word *vīrá* is situated in an extensive and well-attested Indo-European heritage.[1] Like *nár*, the term *vīrá* essentially means "man." At the most literal level, it defines a man in terms of male potency, youthful energy, and raw power: a *vīrá* is a "virile, manly man"—the essential tough guy—and *vīryà* means "virility, manliness, manly power." We will see that this potent masculine quality is more often than not expected to manifest in battle. As Kazzazi (2001: 72–98) points out, the role of a *vīrá* is overwhelmingly martial in nature, and Vedic scholars have long recognized this fact. The term can be translated as "warrior," yet in English we have no feasible, corresponding abstract noun for *vīryà*. Hence, to signal a martial role while maintaining a parallelism, the terms *vīrá* and *vīryà* are often translated as "hero" and "heroism," respectively.[2] This is also the standard translation for both terms throughout Indian history.[3]

From the outset, we should exercise some caution in translating the terms this way as the concept of heroism in ancient India has received little if any critical analysis.[4] Nineteenth-century lexicographers and Sanskritists were often classically trained and applied romanticized and clichéd ideas about Homeric heroes and heroism to Vedic culture. Though it is now considered untenable, it was even proposed that the Greek word *hḗrōs* (*ἥρως*) was the exact cognate of Sanskrit *vīrá* and Latin *vir*.[5] As one might expect, problems ensue when ideas of one culture are transposed onto another. According to Burkert (1985: 203), in the Homeric epics, the term *hḗrōs* applies to all warriors "of whose fame the bard sings; the word is firmly embedded in the formulaic system; practically all the Homeric figures are heroes, particularly the Achaeans *en masse*." With the development of various hero cults, the term comes to designate the demeanor and acts of extraordinary individuals as appropriate to specific times and place: a Greek hero becomes unique and one of a kind.[6] Nevertheless, according to Nagy (1999: 114–115), the Greek hero cult was not a post-epic phenomenon, but developed out of ancient traditions of ancestor worship. As such, a hero in ancient Greece was typically an idealized male warrior who either retained his name or was associated with an archetypical hero or demigod (Ekroth 1999: 145–158). Most heroes have their own individual life stories, especially pertaining to the quality of their bravery and death, lineages, and localized cults (often patronized by private citizens), and their worship tends to be based on their connections with divinities and the degree of mortality or immortality ascribed to them. In Burkert's (1985: 203) words, "The existence of a class of 'heroes' or 'demi-gods' between gods and men is a peculiarity of Greek mythology and religion for which there are very few parallels."

In the *Ṛgveda*, these criteria are not present, nor is there any archeological record of such cults in this period of Indian history (see Allchin 1995; Erdosy

1995). The term *vīrá* is used for various gods, primarily Indra, and poets refer to nameless human *vīrá-* who work for and in conjunction with their war god. However, we do not have access to their lives or personal stories, apart from those of a few poets and rulers. The Ṛgvedic tradition also plays down the identities of real humans. Even when named, chieftains such as Trasadasyu and Sudās align themselves with Indra and subsume their activities under the auspices of their war god. If the status, exploits, and even death of individual human warriors were at all important to early Vedic Āryans, then the Ṛgvedic *sóma* cult was not the arena in which to record this. In addition, male children are called *vīrá-* at birth, rather than acquiring this standing later in life. In short, the *Ṛgveda* does not attest a hero cult. And such cults may not appear in India until well into the common era (see Settar and Sontheimer 1982). If we employ a narrow definition of heroism based on Greek culture, then the use of *vīrá* and *vīryà* do not entail the same ideas. A major point of comparison is that the respective poetic traditions associate both Greek *hḗrōs* and Vedic *vīrá* with the concept of "fame" (Gr. *kléos*; Skt. *śrávas*).[7] This, however, does not mean that ancient Greece and India developed the same martial ideologies or social formations pertaining to warriorhood. While they share a common ancestry, we are dealing with two different cultures and poetic genres—one epic, the other ritual. Furthermore, Indra is the primary focus of Ṛgvedic poetic and ritual activity, and the reputation of human warriors in ancient India never trumps the war god's monopoly of fame. Hence, the kind of individualism and audacity entailed by Greek *hḗrōs* does not lie behind the use of *vīrá* for the participants of the Ṛgvedic ritual tradition.

The English use of the word "hero" is of course directly influenced by its Greek counterpart. It designates a man of extraordinary strength or bravery, who displays exceptional valor and martial achievements, and who is perhaps favored by the gods, deified, and worshipped. However, it now carries a somewhat watered-down sense because anyone admired for nerve or perseverance in any course of action or enterprise can be called a "hero." This is evident in the fact that it can refer to the main protagonist in a story and that in contemporary usage it often approximates notions of selfless martyrdom. Ironically, if heroes in ancient Greece sought undiminished fame, their modern counterparts would not be allowed such hubris. If we employ our modern broad understanding of heroism with all its semantic permutations, then *vīrá* and *vīryà* will of course fit the bill, yet, to my mind, the translations "hero" and "heroism" sound reified and romanticized. What is more, while we do not need hero cults to have heroes, we should not invent cultural values and practices when they do not exist. The point here is that we must theorize the concept of heroism inductively. If we want to constrain what exactly constitutes a Ṛgvedic hero, then the

use of the term *śū́ra* ("big/strong man; champion") most closely approximates a specialized exemplary martial role. If any early Vedic term means "hero," it is *śū́ra*. Let me also point out that even in the context of Indian epic literature the concept of heroism has been poorly defined. McGrath (2004) has concluded that although displaying close synonymy, the unaccented term *śūra* in the *Mahābhārata* best denotes "hero," whereas *vīra* simply means "warrior."[8]

This brings us back to the issue of how to translate *vīrá* and *vīryà* in the *Ṛgveda*. As I have already stated, *vīrá* can be translated simply as "man, male" and *vīryà* as "virility, manliness." The androcentric terms are nevertheless embedded in a clear martial ideology. To signal this, over the years I have worked with the terms "soldier" and "soldiery" and "brave (man)" and "bravery." In the first case, the translations are too militant and thus miss the mark. In the second case, a nuance seems to be lost: though the term *vīryà* certainly carries a connotation of bravery, what is at the heart of this term is the denotation of masculinity.[9] Consequently, the real problem with rendering these two words into English is in trying to maintain the parallelism between them in translation (and thus the uncritical lure of "hero" and "heroism"). My solution has been to drop the supposed need for parallelism in translation, given that it has misleading results; I have settled upon the nouns "brave man" for *vīrá* and "manliness" for *vīryà* where appropriate (although in many cases it is best not to be dogmatic, as *vīryà* can refer to manly acts, qualities, or powers). The translation "brave man" signifies a tough masculine role and demeanor that Āryan men embody in ritualized or actual conflict and competition, and "manliness" encompasses the raw manly power and physical vigor that Āryan men are expected to put in action in potentially deadly situations. These translations also shift our semantic and interpretative lens away from a reified and romanticized notion of heroism so as to allow the *śū́ra* to take his rightful place, so to speak, as the paradigmatic champion of Ṛgvedic martial ideals. In realigning our focus we can still talk meaningfully about courageous manly principles that poets valorize, yet retain a narrow definition of who exactly is the early Vedic hero.

Brave Man (*vīrá*) and Manliness (*vīryà*)

Ṛgvedic poets use the terms *vīrá* and *vīryà* in two dominant contexts relating to martiality and wealth, and, as we will see, neither is mutually exclusive. Before examining the economics of *vīrá*, let us first establish that the term designates a type of warrior or, better yet, a martial role that poet-priests expect of men. In the oldest layer of the text, a poet calls Indra "a brave man [*vīrá*] who dominates in battles."[10] Another early poet states:

ṚV.6.14.4: *agnír apsā́m ṛtīṣáhaṃ vīráṃ dadāti sátpatim, yásya trásanti śávasaḥ saṃcákṣi śátravo bhiyā́.*

"Fire gives a brave man [*vīrá*] who is winning the waters, dominating in the attack, lord of the settlement, whose enemies tremble from fear at the sight of [his] might."

The powerful *vīrá* here is most likely Indra. In the final layer of the text, a poet states that Indra's propensity for violence as a *vīrá* occurs soon after he is born:

ṚV.10.113.4, to Indra: *jajñāná evá vy àbādhata spṛ́dhaḥ pṛ́paśyad vīró abhí paúṃsyaṃ ráṇam, ávṛścad ádrim áva sasyádaḥ sṛjad ástabhnān nā́kaṃ svapasyáyā pṛthúm.*

"On just being born, he drove away the opponents. The brave man [*vīrá*] looked forward to [his] masculine act [*paúṃsya*], to battle. He hewed the stone. He released the flowing streams downward. He propped the broad firmament with [his] good activity."

For this late poet, Indra is born ready to fight (more on this below), and the role of a *vīrá* is defined by battle (*ráṇa*), which is also called a masculine act (*paúṃsya*).[11] Indra is, however, not the only *vīrá* in the divine realm as a family book poet calls Agni a "manly brave man,"[12] and Soma and the Maruts are also called brave men. A hemistich to the omen (*sumaṅgála*) bird also underscores the martial role ascribed to a *vīrá*:

ṚV.2.42.2ab: *mā́ tvā śyená úd vadhīn mā́ suparṇó mā́ tvā vidad íṣumān vīró ástā.*

"Let the falcon not tear you up, nor the eagle. Let a brave man [*vīrá*] with arrows, an archer not find you."[13]

A late poet depicts a similar image in a stanza from the final book:

ṚV.10.103.11: *asmā́kam índraḥ sámṛteṣu dhvajéṣv asmā́kaṃ yā́ íṣavas tā́ jayantu, asmā́kaṃ vīrā́ úttare bhavantv asmā́m̐ u devā avatā́ háveṣu.*

"Let Indra be among us at the clash of standards. Let those arrows that belong to us be victorious. Let our brave men [*vīrá*-] be on top. And, O gods, aid us at [our] invocations."

The allusion to being "on top" or "on high" (loc. *úttare*) refers to winning in combat,[14] yet we note that the poet subjects his warriors' victory to Indra's

presence. These few examples highlight the fact that the term *vīrá* signifies a martial role across all layers of the text. As we will continue to see, success in conflict and competition defines exactly what kind of man a *vīrá* should be. Moreover, the term applies to both divine and human men.[15] Poets thus deploy Indra as the paradigmatic *vīrá* to encode and communicate the hegemonic ideals and practices that human warriors should embody and perform.

Let us turn to the use of *vīryà*. A family book poet indicates that *vīryà* is an embodied physical quality, which in the following case encompasses other manly characteristics:

> ṚV.2.16.2: *yásmād índrād bṛhatáḥ kíṃ caném ṛté víśvāny asmin sámbhṛtādhi vīryà, jaṭháre sómaṃ tanvì sáho máho háste vájram bhárati śīrṣáṇi krátum.*
>
> "Lofty Indra, without whom there is nothing, in him all manly things [*vīryà-*] are brought together: In [his] stomach he bears *sóma*, in [his] body great dominating strength, in [his] hand the mace, [and] in [his] head resolve."

Ṛgvedic poets frequently express their ideologies by way of physical metaphors and realities. In ancient India, the body is at once the site of masculinity and strength and the site at which society is constructed. In the case of this stanza, Indra's body is a spectacle of manly characteristics and physical power. In another hymn, the same poet highlights the martial implications of *vīryà*, while embedding it in a context of physical empowerment (*ukṣitá* < √*ukṣ/vakṣ* "to increase, grow; to be great; to be or make strong"):

> ṚV.2.21.3: *satrāsāhó janabhakṣó janaṃsaháś cyávano yudhmó ánu jóṣam ukṣitáḥ, vṛtaṃcayáḥ sáhurir vikṣv àritá índrasya vocam prá kṛtáni vīryà.*
>
> "Completely dominating, consuming the tribes, dominating the tribes, the agitating fighter was empowered according to [his] pleasure; gathering troops, dominant, having acted as an Āryan [*āritá*] among the clans: I proclaim Indra's deeds, [his] manly acts [*vīryà-*]."

This book 2 poet underscores Indra's martial activity through the use of √*sah* ("to dominate, conquer"), especially in relation to the tribes (*janabhakṣá*, *janaṃsahá*).[16] The meaning of the past participle *āritá* is unclear. Geldner (1951, 1: 302) renders it as "acknowledged" (anerkannt) and Mayrhofer (EWA 1: 172) assigns it to an obscure root √*ār* ("to acknowledge, praise").[17] In contrast, Oldenberg (1912: 97) suggests that it derives from a hypothetical denominative verb √*ārγ* (< *árya*), and

as such would mean something like "having acted as an Āryan." If this is the case, then the poet aligns Indra's forceful demeanor with his standing as a civilized member of society, as if to say that real men are violent. Indeed, the juxtaposition of *vīryà* in the plural with *kṛtā́ni* ("deeds, exploits, acts") highlights that manliness is first and foremost something done (more on this shortly).

Other family book poets underscore the martial implications of *vīryà*. For example:

> ṚV.3.46.1: *yudhmásya te vṛṣabhásya svarā́ja ugrásya yū́na sthávirasya ghṛ́ṣveḥ, ájūryato vajríṇo vīryàṇíndra śrutásya maható mahā́ni.*
>
> "Of you, the fighter, the sovereign bull, the powerful youth, substantial, lively; of the unaging mace wielder, O Indra, great are the manly acts/powers [*vīryà*-] of the great, renowned one."
>
> ṚV.4.50.7: *sá íd rā́jā prátijanyāni víśvā śúṣmeṇa tasthāv abhí vīryèṇa, bṛ́haspátiṃ yáḥ súbhṛtam bibhárti valgūyáti vándate pūrvabhā́jam.*
>
> "Just this one, a chieftain, stood against all opposing tribes due to [his] ferocity, due to [his] manliness [*vīryà*]; the one who brings the well-brought Bṛhaspati, who acts agreeably [and] venerates the one who gets the foremost share."

In the first stanza, Indra is called a "fighter" (*yudhmá*; cf. ṚV.2.21.3b, cited above), a bull, and one physically powerful and young. From the context it is unclear whether the plural of *vīryà* signifies masculine acts or powers or both at once. In his interpretation of the second stanza, Geldner (1951, 1: 480) states that the poet refers to a human ruler. If this is the case, then the poet perhaps expects that his chieftain will follow Indra's bold example and act like him in battle because he embodies Indra's qualities of "ferocity" (*śúṣma*) and manliness (*vīryà*). We can also see that this human ruler somehow manifests Bṛhaspati in the ritual, perhaps by assuming this priestly role, when he respects the poet, who receives the "foremost share" (*pūrvabhā́jam*). The fact that a chieftain (*rā́jan*) is associated with *vīryà* also indicates that this embodied martial ideal is expected of more than just a *vīrá*. In addition, the appositional placement of *śúṣma* ("roaring, snorting; vehemence, ferocity" <√*śuṣ* "to snort, pant") suggests that *vīryà* signifies an equally aggressive characteristic.[18] Indeed, the chieftain's lone actions in battle highlight the courageous connotations of *vīryà* since bravery is most certainly a necessity when facing down a host of opponents.[19]

In a similar vein, a book 1 poet underscores the martial implications of *vīryà* in relation to what looks like territorial conquest:

ṚV.1.131.4: *vidúṣ ṭe asyá vīryàsya pūrávaḥ púro yád indra śā́radīr avā́tiraḥ sāsahānó avā́tiraḥ, śā́sas tám indra mártyam áyajyuṃ śavasas pate, mahím amuṣṇāḥ pṛthivím imā́ apó mandasāná imā́ apáḥ.*

"The Pūrus know of this manly power [*vīryà*] of yours, when, O Indra, you brought down the autumnal forts, dominating, you brought them down. O Indra, you will chastise this mortal who does not offer sacrifice, O lord of might. You stole the great earth and these waters, being exhilarated [you stole] these waters."

While it is impossible to know whether the image here is contemporary or not to the life of this late poet, he celebrates Indra's seasonal conquest of enemy settlements and pastoral territory. It also seems to be the case that Indra's martial prowess lends him the moral authority to berate a person who fails to participate in rituals. The poet perhaps implies that if Indra can overthrow enemy forts and deliver natural resources because of his manly nerve and vigor, the sacrificer should demonstrate his manliness by patronizing the poet-priest's ritual performance.

In three stanzas from a hymn to Indra, another book 1 poet reproduces many of the themes encountered so far with *vīryà*:

ṚV.1.80.7: *índra túbhyam íd adrivó 'nuttaṃ vajrin vīryàm, yád dha tyám māyínam mṛgáṃ tám u tvám māyáyāvadhīr árcann ánu svarā́jyam.*

"O Indra, O stone carrier, to you manliness [*vīryà*] was surely conceded, O mace wielder. When you [kept smashing] this crafty wild beast, then you slew him through [your] craftiness. They exalt [your] sovereignty."

ṚV.1.80.8: *ví te vájrāso asthiran navatíṃ nāvyā̀ ánu, mahát ta indra vīryàm bāhvós te bálaṃ hitám árcann ánu svarā́jyam.*

"Your maces have been dispersed over ninety rivers. O Indra, your manliness [*vīryà*] is great. Strength is established in your two arms. They exalt [your] sovereignty."

ṚV.1.80.15: *nahí nú yā́d adhīmásíndraṃ kó vīryà̀ paráḥ, tásmin nṛmṇám utá krátuṃ devā́ ójāṃsi sáṃ dadhur árcann ánu svarā́jyam.*

"Insofar as we know, is there no one now who surpasses Indra in manliness [*vīryà*]? In him the gods altogether established manhood, resolve, and powers. They exalt [your] sovereignty."[20]

In the first stanza, *vīryà* is conceded (*ánuttam* < *ánu √dā*) to Indra, which implies that the poet recognizes the war god's unmatched virility and his need of ritual empowerment. It further suggests that he could lose his manly power—we recall that the deity takes away the manhood (*nṛmṇá*) of foes.[21] In the second stanza, the poet lauds the war god's *vīryà* as great, while emphasizing the importance of his physical strength. In the final stanza, the poet aligns *vīryà* with manhood, resolve, and manifold powers, and appears to ask a rhetorical question. I suspect the answer is that no one has more male potency than Indra.[22] The poet even insinuates this when he accredits Indra's powerful, decisive, and manly character to the activity of the gods. This perhaps reminds human men that their war god's attributes are unattainable, at least without the gods' help. The poet also finishes each stanza of this hymn with a refrain praising Indra's sovereignty (*svarā́jya*). As these three stanzas suggest, Indra's political standing comes from masculine qualities, a powerful physique, and a certain talent for violence; this is also the semantic context in which *vīryà* is consistently embedded.

Let us return to the performance of *vīryà*. We recall at ṚV.2.21.3, cited above, that the term is juxtaposed with "deeds" (*kṛtá-*). There is an underlying strategy in the way the poet-priests characterize Indra's manly exploits as several poets doubt his ability to carry them out, as if to goad the war god into action. Consider a stanza from the oldest layer in which the poet questions his war god's intentions:

> ṚV.6.18.3: *tváṃ ha nú tyád adamāyo dásyūm̐r ékaḥ kṛṣṭír avanor*
> *áryāya, ásti svin nú vīryàṃ tát ta indra ná svid asti tád ṛtuthā́ ví vocaḥ.*
>
> "But now it is you that suppressed the barbarians, alone you vanquished the lands for the Āryan. Does this manly power [*vīryà*] of yours now exist or not, O Indra? You will declare that in proper fashion."

This poet praises his war god's victory over non-Āryan peoples and his conquest of (presumably) their territory, yet questions whether Indra will carry out further acts of violence. The poet provides an answer to his question in the next stanza:

> ṚV.6.18.4: *sád íd dhí te tuvijātásya mánye sáhaḥ sahiṣṭha turatás*
> *turásya, ugrám ugrásya tavásas távīyó 'radhrasya radhratúro babhūva.*
>
> "For I think that the dominating strength of you who are born with vigor, O most dominant one, as the overcoming one who overcomes,

> is surely real. Powerfulness has come to the powerful one, greater energy to the energetic one, to the one that succumbs to none, who overcomes the succumbed ones."

Oberlies (1998: 396) points out that the basic question of many Ṛgvedic poets is simply "Where is Indra?"[23] This poet is more specific in questioning Indra's manliness, yet he immediately asserts that his physical power exists. While it may simply be a personal affirmation or vote of confidence, the poet-priest perhaps underscores his ritual ability to strengthen Indra; he does assert in the second half of the stanza that the war god has received power and energy.

Another family book poet employs a similar tactic in first praising Indra's manly physical qualities, then openly doubting whether his war god can manifest them anew:

> ṚV.3.30.3: *índraḥ suśípro maghávā tárutro mahávrātas tuvikūrmír ṛ́ghāvān, yád ugró dhā́ bādhitó mártyeṣu kvà tyā́ te vṛṣabha vīryā̀ṇi.*
>
> "Indra of good moustache, munificent, surpassing, of great troop, vigorously active, ballsy; since as a powerful one, even when oppressed, you established [your manly acts/powers] among mortals: Where are those manly acts/powers [*vīryà-*] of yours [now], O bull?"

In questioning their war god's manliness and courage, these poet-priests seem to be keeping him on his toes, so to speak, as he must constantly manifest his virile deeds and qualities for his worshippers. In doing this, ritualists are perhaps able to demonstrate their own masculinity and ritual mastery over Indra. If we extrapolate this to the human world, then it may be the case that martially inclined men cannot rest on their laurels as well. This may reflect a strategy whereby poets challenge human warriors to live up to Indra's example by implicitly questioning their willingness to fight. At the end of this chapter, we will see that poets eulogize warriors, yet throughout the *Ṛgveda* they slander males, whether gods or humans, who are cowardly, penurious, or fail to perform rituals. Poets thus possess the power in ritual either to glorify courageous men or to vilify them if they do not live up to ritual or martial expectations. One poet even insinuates that displays of manliness and courage will protect men from derision as Indra is immune to insults because of his masculine nature (*paúṃsya*).[24]

Nevertheless, ritual practitioners seem unwilling to concede that men can ever match their war god's example. We recall at ṚV.1.80.15 (cited above) that the poet questions whether anyone can best Indra's *vīryà*. An early poet also implies that men possess *vīryà*, yet none surpass Indra in manly power and activity:

ṚV.5.42.6, to Indra: *marútvato ápratītasya jiṣṇór ájūryataḥ prá bravāmā kṛ́tāni, ná te pū́rve maghavan náparāso ná vīryàṃ nū́tanaḥ káś canápa.*

"We will pronounce the deeds of the unassailable, victorious, unaging one who is associated with the Maruts. O munificent one, none prior to you, nor after, no one at this time has achieved [your] manliness [*vīryà*]."

This poet communicates the idea that Indra's raw masculine nature is unmatched, yet—by raising the ideological bar, so to speak—also implies that human warriors should accept the war god's generous, yet aggressive disposition as normative.[25] In a similar vein, a poet from the middle layer attributes the performance of all manly activity to the war god alone:

ṚV.8.63.6: *índre víśvāni vīryà kṛtáni kártvāni ca, yám arkā́ adhvaráṃ vidúḥ.*

"In Indra are all manly acts [*vīryà-*], whether performed or to be performed, he is the one whom the chanters know throughout the rite."

As we have already seen, poets assert that to be victorious in cattle raids or war, men need Indra on their side. This poet seems to be taking this one step further as he implies that his fellow ritual practitioners are concerned only with acknowledging (√*vid* "to know") the war god's activity in ritual. In ascribing all manly deeds to Indra, the poet is perhaps saying that no matter what men individually do, their martial activity will be attributed to the war god. If this is the case, then the poet is deliberately downplaying the martial activity of his tribe's warriors by assigning their victories to Indra. In this context, a late poet reproduces the idea that no human can achieve Indra's levels of masculinity:

ṚV.10.43.5: *kṛtáṃ ná śvaghnī́ ví cinoti dévane saṃvárgaṃ yán maghávā sū́ryaṃ jáyat, ná tát te anyó ánu vīryàṃ śakan ná purāṇó maghavan nótá nū́tanaḥ.*

"As the gambler piles up his winnings in the game, the munificent one [Indra] wins booty that is the sun. No other is able to imitate your manliness [*vīryà*], neither one of old, O munificent one, nor a current one."

Ṛgvedic poet-priests thus dare their war god to perform new martial deeds by questioning his masculinity, on the one hand, while inextricably linking the

identity of human warriors, albeit inferior, to Indra on the other. The two strategies appear to be parallel in their meaning and intent. Just as poet-priests question Indra's manly nature to goad him into more warlike feats, they also question if real men have lived up to the war god's expectations. It is unlikely that ritualists are undermining a man's masculinity in absolute terms by saying that he can never match his war god and hence that he should not even try. Rather, I think it is the case that they are conditionally destabilizing a man's sense that he has done enough as a warrior. In insisting that men cannot ever actually attain their war god's manly qualities or accomplish his daring exploits, ritual practitioners are implicitly challenging human warriors to act like Indra by continually carrying out martial deeds; this is exactly what they expect of the war god as his virility and bravery are repeatedly questioned so as to compel him into new acts of aggression.

There is a certain degree of tension in the discourse here as poets propagate an unattainable ideal, while ascribing human victories to Indra. This tension is nonetheless productive. Just as human warriors prove their masculinity by living up to their war god's example, Indra proves his masculinity by carrying out new acts of violence. Neither Indra nor men however can rest assured that they have fulfilled their martial obligations in capturing cattle, securing fertile grazing fields and waterways, and winning wars. Consequently, the tension works to sustain an androcentric ideology and a ritualized economy from which ritual practitioners and the wider community directly benefit (see below). Moreover, in exercising their right to question the war god, ritualists display their command over divine and human men. To put it another way, there is some irony in the poet's question at ṚV.1.80.15, as the real answer is that poet-priests have more power than Indra because they exercise the means to summon, empower, and deploy him. In other words, poet-priests first assert their control over the divine realm by constantly compelling Indra to act violently; and second over the human realm by constantly subjecting the masculinity of human men to their war god's example and by attributing their successes to the war god. It seems that Indra is great only if he continues to engage in conflict, and men are only worth their weight if they constantly strive to match their war god's victories, however impossible this may be.

In summary, the evidence presented in this section indicates that the term *vīrá* denotes a tough masculine role, and *vīryà* signifies specific androcentric qualities and martial acts, which are expected of Indra and, by extension, of human men. In questioning Indra's masculinity and martial activity and also that of men, poets are able to encourage both parties to carry out cattle raids and warfare anew. What is more, in presenting Indra as the paradigmatic warrior, poets can strategically circumscribe and influence the behavior and

identity of men who seek to demonstrate their manhood in martial terms and in the image of their war god. Ṛgvedic poets thus reproduce the ideals of *vīrá* and *vīryà* across all layers of the text to define and encourage a combative form of masculinity. We have then some preliminary insights into the discursive cluster of ideas and strategic practices that Ṛgvedic poet-priests employ to define an Āryan man in terms of physical toughness, an energetic readiness to act, and martial prowess, while also maintaining the dominance of their ritual tradition. Let us now consider in more depth one way that poets encode and naturalize masculine ideals within the bodies of men.

Indra's Inborn Masculinity

As we saw above, Indra is said to be "born with vigor" (ṚV.6.18.4a: *tuvijātá*), and, as a newborn *vīrá*, the war god looked forward to his masculine act of battle (ṚV.10.113.4). Indra's birth narrative sheds further light on his masculine nature as several poets from the oldest layer state that the god is born with *vīryà*. For example:

> ṚV.5.29.14: *etā́ víśvā cakṛvā́m̐ indra bhū́ry áparīto janúṣā vīryèṇa, yā́ cin nú vajrin kṛṇávo dadhṛṣvā́n ná te vartā́ táviṣyā asti tásyāḥ.*
>
> "Having done all these many things, O Indra, you cannot be surrounded due to [your] inborn nature, due to [your] manly power [*vīryà*]. O mace wielder, you will perform these acts even now as one who is daring. There is no obstructor of this vigorous behavior of yours."

This poet correlates *vīryà* with *janús* ("inborn nature") and deploys it in the context of Indra's courageous and energetic activity. A similar idea appears in an old, yet obscure stanza:

> ṚV.4.18.5: *avadyám iva mányamānā gúhākar índram mātā́ vīryèṇā nyṛ̀ṣṭam, áthód asthāt svayám átkaṃ vásāna ā́ ródasī apṛṇāj jā́yamānaḥ.*
>
> "Thinking he was somehow unworthy to be spoken of, his mother secreted Indra, [though] he was bursting with manliness [*vīryà*]. But he stood up, clothing himself in his own robe. He filled the world halves as he was being born."

While the myth is unclear, Indra's mother lacks confidence in her son and hides him from enemies at birth.[26] However, the war god seems to be so full of

destructive virility that in this stanza, he takes control of the universe, and in the rest of the hymn destroys his rivals. Three stanzas later, the poet gives voice to Indra's mother as she appears to change her mind:

> ṚV.4.18.8d: *mámac cid índraḥ sáhasód atiṣṭhat.*
>
> "'It was certainly because of me that Indra stood up with dominating strength.'"

Since Indra is overflowing with manly potency at birth, it is no surprise that the war god is born to conquer the universe and enemies. Consider another family book poet from the middle layer who begins his hymn with three stanzas that underscore Indra's natural predilection for violence:

> ṚV.7.20.1: *ugró jajñe vīryàya svadhā́vāñ cákrir ápo náryo yát kariṣyán, jágmir yúvā nṛ́ṣádanam ávobhis trātā́ na índra énaso mahā́ś cit.*
>
> "The powerful independent one was born to manliness [*vīryà*]. Manly, he is active when he will perform his work. As a youth going to the seat of men with aid after aid, Indra is our rescuer from even great evil."
>
> ṚV.7.20.2: *hántā vṛtrám índraḥ śū́śuvānaḥ prā́vīn nú vīró jaritā́ram ūtí́, kártā sudā́se áha vā́ ulokáṃ dā́tā vásu múhur ā́ dāśúṣe bhūt.*
>
> "Smasher of Vṛtra, Indra, swelling up, as a brave man [*vīrá*] he has now aided the singer with help. He is, most certainly, the maker of wide space for Sudās. Giver of treasure to the one who ritually serves, he has become present in an instant."
>
> ṚV.7.20.3: *yudhmó anarvā́ khajakṛ́t samádvā śū́raḥ satrāṣā́ḍ janúṣem áṣāḷhaḥ, vy ā̀sa índraḥ pṛ́tanāḥ svójā ádhā víśvaṃ śatrūyántaṃ jaghāna.*
>
> "He is a fighter, without contest, instigating melee, combat-ready. He is a champion, completely dominating, unable to be dominated even at birth. Indra of good power threw apart the battle hosts. Then he smashed everyone acting as an enemy."

According to this poet, as a "brave man", "fighter", and "champion" (*vīrá*, *yudhmá*, *śū́ra*), Indra is unrelenting in his violent activity. The war god is born to fight, and *vīryà* signifies this highly valued, tough masculine quality. In addition, the poet-priest is clear that Indra's victories benefit his worshippers and bring wealth and open territory to his sacrificer, who is either the real chieftain Sudās or someone modeled on him.

For these poets, *vīrá* signifies an inborn masculine role, and *vīryà* is an innate physical characteristic that engenders a propensity for violence. Similar to modern ideas that mistakenly draw a direct relationship between testosterone and violence (see Dabbs 2000), Ṛgvedic thought locates Indra's aggressive tendencies in his body as a natural consequence of male gender. While we should be careful not to generalize from the war god's example, Indra's mythological birth may correspond in the human realm to a ritualized process whereby the sacrificer, and perhaps a chieftain, has a symbolic rebirth in a ritual performance—this is at least the case in the classical Vedic tradition where the *yájamāna* and the *rā́jan* undergo a ritual rebirth when consecrated in, respectively, the *dīkṣā* and the *rājasūya* rites (the latter literally meaning "the generation of the king"). If this is the case in the Ṛgvedic context, as Heesterman (1993: 165–187) believes it is, then the image of Indra's potent birth into violence may represent a parallel way in which men can performatively display their commitment to a martial ideology. That is to say, poet-priests instruct and legitimize men who are expected to carry out martial acts by leading them through a form of ritual rebirth. Like their war god, warriors are symbolically (re)born into manliness and violence. Ṛgvedic poets also communicate the idea that human males are born full of vim, vigor, and a readiness to fight; that is, boys are born with a tough ideology hanging over their heads because poets frequently characterize male children as *vīrá*.[27] Several scholars have even suggested that *vīrá* should be translated as "son."[28] In some of its appearances, *vīrá* includes a certain degree of intentional ambiguity as to whether poets are referring to adults or children. However, the translation "son" is at best a connotation or at worst erroneous. Ṛgvedic poets repeatedly emphasize the importance of youthfulness, virility, and energy, especially Indra's, so as to make this the ideal state for all men, no matter their age. In labeling male children with a demanding androcentric role from birth, ritual participants express their desire for masculine offspring, while communicating the value that, like Indra, they should grow up to be energetic, youthful, tough, and strong. This underscores one of the ways that ritual practitioners legitimize their androcentric ideology, and it highlights the way in which males, whether young or old, are socialized within a specific masculine role. Poets mythologize the precedent for this as Indra is a potent and powerful warrior from the moment he is born: he is the most manly and destructive baby in the early Vedic universe. Poet-priests thus demonstrate their patriarchal dominance as they ritually birth Indra, among other gods (especially Agni), and nurse him with *sóma* and praise to strengthen him for battle and cosmic supremacy. Indeed, it seems that ritual practitioners are more invested in rearing the war child than is his own mother.

The Economy of Men

I: Lords, Alliances, and Brave Men

The following three sections will consider the ways in which Ṛgvedic poets construct the social, economic, and political position of *vīrá* in early Vedic culture. Just as male children are under the control of their fathers, *vīrá-* appear to be subordinated to individuals in political positions, and their allegiance is gained through pacts or subjugation. Furthermore, the patriarchal relationship between fathers and sons serves as the model for a lord's control of warriors. To highlight this, consider the use of the idiom "brave men of the Asura" (*ásurasya vīrā́ḥ*). As Hale (1986) has convincingly argued, in the *Ṛgveda* the term *ásura* denotes a type of lord or leader, whether divine or human, benevolent or malevolent, who has a fighting force under his command. For example:

> ṚV.3.53.7: *imé bhojā́ áṅgiraso vírūpā divás putrā́so ásurasya vīrā́ḥ,*
> *viśvā́mitrāya dádato maghā́ni sahasrasāvé prá tiranta ā́yuḥ.*
>
> "The hospitable ones, Aṅgirases of different kinds, sons of Heaven, brave men of the Asura, bestowing bounties on Viśvāmitra at the pressing accompanied by a thousand [cows], they extend [his] lifetime."

Hale (1986: 44) suggests that the *ásura* is the god Sky or Heaven because the *vīrá-* are called "sons of Heaven" (*divás putrā́saḥ*). However, he points out that in other cases the god Rudra is called the Asura of Heaven and is said to rule over heaven (43–44). What is more, Rudra is said to be the father of the Maruts and is called a *vīrá* himself.[29] The *vīrá-* in this stanza may be the Maruts, as they are elsewhere called the "men of heaven" (*divó náraḥ*).[30] In two stanzas from another family book hymn, unidentified *vīrá-* are placed under the rule of Asura Varuṇa,[31] and Geldner (1951, 2: 88 n. 2) suggests that they are the Maruts. In the above stanza, if the *ásura* is Rudra and the brave men are the Maruts, then the relationship signaled by the poet's use of the genitive case in both the "sons of Heaven" and "brave men of the Asura" is possessive,[32] thereby implying a hierarchal and familial relationship between a heavenly father and his warlike sons.

Another book 3 poet states that an Asura possesses *vīrá-* who are themselves in a position of rulership:

> ṚV.3.56.8: *trír uttamā́ dūṇáśā rocanā́ni tráyo rājanty ásurasya vīrā́ḥ,*
> *ṛtā́vāna iṣirā́ dūḷábhāsas trír ā́ divó vidáthe santu devā́ḥ.*

> "Threefold are the highest realms of light, difficult to reach. Three brave men of the Asura rule. Let the truthful, refreshed, difficult-to-deceive gods be at the distribution ceremony three times a day."

With regard to this stanza, Geldner (1951, 1: 404) states that the unidentified *ásura* is Heaven and his brave men are the three primary Ādityas—Mitra, Varuṇa, and Aryaman—who are the paradigmatic gods of sociopolitical order, justice, and punishment.[33] Though this theory is plausible, Hale (1986: 45) thinks Geldner's position is not compelling, yet he remains silent on the identities of the brave men and the Asura. He does note that "an asura can have heroes who rule 'under' him." The three *vīrá-* in this stanza may be the Maruts since they are elsewhere compared to chieftains,[34] said to rule over the cosmos,[35] and are numbered as "three and sixty."[36]

In a related context, a book 1 poet states that the Maruts pursue the goddess Rodasī ("world halves") to be their wife and that she is qualified as "lordly" (*asuryà*).[37] It seems that this poet wants the Maruts to marry within their noble station as they presumably hold the same position as their father. It is noteworthy, then, that the Maruts are explicitly called *ásura-* for the first time in a book 1 stanza that refers to them as "young men of Rudra" (*rudrásya máryāḥ*).[38] Another book 1 poet appears to allude to the same myth:

> ṚV.1.122.1: *prá vaḥ pā́ntaṃ raghumanyavó 'ndho yajñáṃ rudrā́ya mīḷhúṣe bharadhvam, divó astoṣy ásurasya vīraír iṣudhyéva marúto ródasyoḥ.*
>
> "O swift-minded ones, for you all, bring forth the drink, the plant, [and] the sacrifice for [your] benefactor Rudra. With the brave men [*vīrá-*] of the Asura of Heaven, I have praised [Rudra], like [I praised] the Maruts due to [their] striving for Rodasī."

Although the syntax is unclear, Hale (1986: 75) states that the heavenly *ásura* here is Rudra, and his *vīrá-* would presumably be the Maruts, who pursue Rodasī.[39] Therefore, the phrase "brave men of the Asura" (*ásurasya vīrā́ḥ*) seems to reflect a hierarchal relationship between a lord and his warriors, and this is modeled on a father's relationship with his sons, especially that of Rudra and the Maruts.[40] It is noteworthy then that nonfamily book poets introduce the compound *kṣayádvīra* ("governing brave men"), and of its eight appearances it qualifies Rudra five times.[41]

In the same vein as the Maruts, a family book poet explicitly states that a *vīrá* can also be an Asura:

> ṚV.7.56.24: *asmé vīró marutaḥ śuṣmy àstu jánānāṃ yó ásuro vidhartā́, apó yéna sukṣitáye táremā́dha svám óko abhí vaḥ syāma.*
>
> "Among us let there be a ferocious brave man [*vīrá*], O Maruts, who will be an Asura of the tribes and a dispenser; through whom may we cross the waters to a good place to settle. And then for you all, may we control [our] own home."

Hale (1986: 66) states that Indra is never explicitly called an *ásura* in the family books. Nevertheless, given the context and semantics of this stanza, the warrior here could be the war god himself (or possibly Agni).[42] On the other hand, Hale states that the brave *ásura* is a human leader who rules over his people (49). If this is the case, then the poet models his chieftain's description and actions on Indra and admonishes him to live up to his role as a generous *vīrá*, who will secure new territories and a safe place to dwell during seasonal migrations.[43]

Finally, a book 3 poet suggests that a chieftain maintains a relationship with warriors and this is related to the gods' "Asura-ship" (*asuratvá*):

> ṚV.3.55.21: *imā́ṃ ca naḥ pṛthivíṃ viśvádhāyā úpa kṣeti hitámitro ná rā́jā, puraḥsádaḥ śarmasádo ná vīrā́ḥ mahád devā́nām asuratvám ékam.*
>
> "And nourishing all, he [Agni] dwells peacefully for us on this earth like a chieftain with alliances set in place. He is stationed in front, like brave men [*vīrá*-] stationed for protection. Great is the Asura-ship of the gods alone."

While Indra is famed as a *vīrá* for finding wealth in the preceding stanza, the poet here is most likely comparing Agni to the chieftain since the god is described in almost identical terms in a book 1 stanza.[44] In either case, Brereton (1981: 30 n. 34) notes that the stanza describes a chieftain who has not betrayed his allies and for this reason maintains some form of peace. If we read the two similes together, then perhaps the chieftain is able to maintain treaties on account of his warriors. In turn, the brave men either receive his protection, which would further imply that this is a metaphor for being under a warlord's command, or the chieftain is in a state of peace because he is protected by warriors. It is also noteworthy that the poet ends each stanza of his hymn with a refrain proclaiming the "Asura-ship" (*asuratvá*) of the gods. In the case of the above stanza, perhaps the quality of the chieftain's alliances and his treatment of loyal warriors should be upheld in the same manner as a divine Asura.

While beneficial masters receive ritual praise, several family book poets indicate that warriors of rival lords are a threat and should be dealt with accordingly:

> ṚV.2.14.7, to Indra: *ádhvaryavo yáḥ śatám ā́ sahásram bhū́myā upásthé 'vapaj jaghanvā́n, kútsasyāyór atithigvásya vīrā́n ny ávṛṇag bháratā sómaṃ asmai*.
>
> "O Adhvaryus, to the one who flung here the hundred, the thousand, on the lap of the earth, having smashed them, and hurled down the brave men (*vīrá*-) of Kutsa, of Āyu, and of Atithigva, bring *sóma* to him."
>
> ṚV.7.99.5: *índrāviṣṇū dṛṃhitā́ḥ śámbarasya náva púro navatíṃ ca śnathiṣṭam, śatáṃ varcínaḥ sahásraṃ ca sākáṃ hathó apraty ásurasya vīrā́n*.
>
> "O Indra and Viṣṇu, you two pierced the nine and ninety firmly made forts of Śambara. You two smash at once a hundred and a thousand brave men (*vīrá*-) of the Asura Varcin unopposed."

In the first stanza, *vīrá*- are under the control of three rival Āryan chieftains (see Witzel 1995b: 329–332). In contrast, in the second stanza, a non-Āryan Asura controls *vīrá*-.[45] Elsewhere, Bṛhaspati is commanded to wound "brave men of the Asura, with their wolfish gait."[46] In all these cases *vīrá*- are enemy warriors under the command of rival lords, and we note that poets target them for death.[47] In contrast, in the final book of the *Ṛgveda*, a late poet implies that certain ethics should ideally underlie the hierarchal relationship between able-bodied men and lords:

> ṚV.10.132.5ab, to Indra and Varuṇa: *asmín sv ètác chákapūta éno hité mitré nígatān hanti vīrā́n*.
>
> "On this one, on Śakapūta is this evil act: Though a treaty was in place, he smashes the brave men (*vīrá*-) who have surrendered."

Śakapūta's evil act is presumably his failure to uphold a treaty (*mitrá*) and his slaying of defeated warriors.[48] It seems that men who surrender should not be killed—a battle ethic that will continue to be a part of the idealistic warrior code (*kṣatriyadharma*) in subsequent millennia in India.

These limited examples suggest then that lords should have tough courageous men at their disposal, and that the position of a *vīrá* is defined by a hierarchal political relationship. An examination of the term *suvíra* will further illuminate the relationship between *vīrá*- and their masters.

II: Controlling Brave Men (suvíra)

In analyzing the term *suvíra*, the prefix *su-* can variously mean "good, well, easy, right" or "fit, strong." The term is used uniformally throughout the *Ṛgveda* as a possessive compound, and thus it can variously mean "rich in or consisting of good men," "possessing or controlling fit males (or warriors)," or simply "well manned."[49] It typically qualifies a person in a position of power over *vīrá-* and for this reason signifies a commander or master of sorts (cf. Watkins 1995: 114).[50] This initial observation is confirmed by the fact that the Maruts, Indra's warrior band, are *vīrá-*,[51] yet are never explicitly called *suvíra-*.[52] Consider two stanzas to Indra from the oldest layer:

> ṚV.6.17.13: *evā́ tā́ víśvā cakṛvā́ṃsam índram mahā́m ugrám ajuryáṃ sahodā́m, suvíraṃ tvā svāyudháṃ suvájram ā́ bráhma návyam ávase vavṛtyāt.*
>
> "It is only Indra that has done all these things; great, powerful, unaging, giver of dominating strength; it is you, possessing good men [*suvíra*], good weapons, [and] a good mace that [our] new formulation should turn here for help."
>
> ṚV.6.45.6: *náyasíd v áti dvíṣaḥ kṛṇóṣy ukthaśaṃsínaḥ, nṝ́bhiḥ suvíra ucyase.*
>
> "You surely lead [us] beyond hostilities. You make [us] reciters of hymns. By men you are said to be in control of good men [*suvíra*]."

In the first stanza, Indra's command of warriors parallels other instruments of war. In the second stanza, the poet also recognizes Indra's control of warriors. Both examples highlight the fact that the term *suvíra* denotes a man in control of other men (in the above cases, either the Maruts or human warriors). The final line of the second stanza could even be loosely translated as "by or with men you are called a commander."

Indra is not the only god who controls men. Soma is called *suvíra*, while at the same time he does not destroy warriors (*ávīrahan*).[53] This metaphorical image parallels a hemistich in which ritual participants call themselves *suvíra-* when they approach Soma:

> ṚV.9.61.23ab: *suvírāso vayáṃ dhánā jáyema soma mīḍhvaḥ.*
>
> "May we, being well manned [*suvíra-*], win stakes, O Soma, O benefactor."

Family book poets also state that Agni takes the title *suvíra*. For example:

> ṚV.3.29.9cd: *ayám agníḥ pṛtanāṣāṭ suvíro yéna devā́so ásahanta dásyūn.*
>
> "This Fire, being well manned, is dominating in battles, through which the gods dominated the barbarians."[54]
>
> ṚV.7.15.7-8: *ní tvā nakṣya viśpate dyumántaṃ deva dhīmahi, suvíram agna āhuta. kṣápa usráś ca dīdihi svagnáyas tváyā vayám, suvíras tvám asmayúḥ.*
>
> "May we establish you, O valued clan lord, as the majestic one, O god, as one who is well manned, O Fire as one who receives the poured oblation. Shine throughout the nights and dawns. Through you we possess good fires. Being well manned, you seek us."

In both examples, Fire has warriors under his command and we note that in the first example being a *suvíra* is directly connected with success in battle. It is perhaps for this reason that an early poet approaches Agni to acquire stout men:

> ṚV.6.50.9d: *táva syām agné 'vasā suvíraḥ.*
>
> "With your help may I be well manned, O Fire."

In the final layer, a late poet gives Agni voice as he addresses the gods:

> ṚV.10.52.5: *ā́ vo yakṣy amṛtatváṃ suvíraṃ yáthā vo devā várivaḥ kárāṇi, ā́ bāhvór vájram índrasya dheyām áthemā́ víśvāḥ pṛ́tanā jayāti.*
>
> "'For you all, I will gain through sacrifice a well-manned deathless state, so that I will make a wide space for you all, O gods. May I place the mace in Indra's arms, so he will win all these battles.'"

The term *suvíra* here most likely qualifies *amṛtatvá* ("deathlessness, immortality") because one of the dominant ways in which Ṛgvedic poets express the notion of immortality is through the possession of males, whether offspring or able-bodied warriors, to carry on one's lineage and protect one's assets. In contrast, Geldner (1951, 3: 214) states that the term *suvíra* refers to Indra, since he is the focus of the second hemistich. In either case, these examples highlight the reciprocal relationship that Āryan men share with Agni as they symbolically affirm their control of other males, whether sons or warriors, through the ritual Fire.

A stanza from the final layer of the *Ṛgveda* alludes to a rich, yet obscure social reality involving the control of men:

> ṚV.10.18.9, to Ancestors: *dhánur hástād ādádāno mṛtásyāsmé kṣatráya várcase bálāya, átraivá tvám ihá vayáṃ suvírā víśvā spṛ́dho abhímātīr jayema.*
>
> "Taking the bow from the hand of the dead man for our dominion, lustre, and strength, [I say]: 'You just there, we here, being well manned, may we conquer all oppositions and hostile intents.'"

The identity of the dead man is unclear, though Geldner (1951, 3: 153) notes that he is a warrior.[55] He appears to have been held in high esteem as various individuals qualified as *suvíra-* take his bow to symbolize their attainment of political dominion (*kṣatrá*), lustrous prestige (*várcas*), and strength (*bála*). In the preceding stanzas, one of them possibly covets the dead man's wife, perhaps in an act of levirate.[56] The underlying social reality may be that lords of men can appropriate the assets, both material and symbolic, of a fallen comrade, including his sons or warriors. Their actions could possibly be a ritualized display of tribal, or at least family, unity after a chieftain's death. Furthermore, the speaker emphasizes the importance of succeeding in martial endeavors perhaps to underscore performatively the status and point of controlling men; perhaps also to signal ritually an act of retribution.

The ritual and political implications of being in control of men is further evident in the fact that wealthy patrons (*sūrí-*) are frequently qualified as *suvíra-*. It also seems to be the case that ritual performances function as a significant venue in which wealthy patrons can demonstrate their control of, or at least their desire to control, other men. For example, one family book poet states:

> ṚV.7.1.24: *mahó no agne suvitásya vidvā́n rayíṃ sūríbhya ā́ vahā bṛhántam, yéna vayáṃ sahasāvan mádemā́vikṣitāsa ā́yuṣā suvírāḥ.*
>
> "Knowing of the great easy passage for us, O Fire, convey here to the patrons wealth that reaches aloft, whereby, O dominating one, we, being undiminished, being well manned, may find exhilaration through [our] lifetime."[57]

Thieme (1938: 159) argues that the term *sūrí* refers to a friendly lord (Gastlicher, Herr). It consists of the prefix *su-* plus a form of *arí*, which he thinks refers to a stranger in the *Ṛgveda*.[58] Brereton (1981) has argued that such a stranger is a

civilized member of early Vedic society; a compatriot of sorts. While it is unclear—and by no means the final word on the matter—the word *arí* may derive from roots for either "wealth" or "piety."[59] As such, *sūrí* would literally mean "very wealthy or pious one"—that is, a noble, benefactor, or patron. Poets definitely use *sūrí* in contexts relating to ritual participation and wealth, and they apply it to social leaders ranging from house lords to chieftains. In the above stanza, the patrons are *suvíra-* who seek wealth and happiness throughout their lives, and this appears to depend on their control of able-bodied males.

There are plenty of examples in which patrons strive to increase their assets in competition or battle. For example:

> ṚV.7.90.6: *īśānā́so yé dádhate svàr ṇo góbhir áśvebhir vásubhir hiraṇyaiḥ, índravāyū sūráyo víśvam ā́yur árvadbhir vīraíḥ pr̥tanāsu sahyuḥ.*
>
> "These are the ones who, being masters, establish the sun for us along with cattle, horses, and golden treasures: O Indra and Vāyu, throughout [their] whole lifetime, may [our] patrons dominate in battles with race horses and brave men (*vīrá-*)."

As "masters" (*īśānā́saḥ*), these patrons support their community and pay for ritual performances with different forms of wealth. In turn, poet-priests approach Indra and Vāyu ("Wind") so that their patrons will win battles with horses and warriors. A nonfamily book poet implies that his patrons inherit wealth from their forefathers, while also reproducing the value that they should amass capital from competitions and warfare:

> ṚV.1.73.9: *árvadbhir agne árvato nr̥̄́bhir nr̥̄́n vīraír vīrā́n vanuyāmā tvótāḥ, īśānā́saḥ pitr̥vittásya rāyó ví sūráyaḥ śatáhimā no aśyuḥ.*
>
> "O Fire, may we win race horses with race horses, men with men, and brave men [*vīrá-*] with brave men, aided by you: Being masters of wealth acquired by their fathers, may our patrons of a hundred winters obtain [this]."[60]

This poet objectifies horses, men (*nár-*), and warriors (*vīrá-*) as commodities to be won (or lost) in competition by wealthy patrons, who, like the previous example, are also called masters. Since there is little or no evidence for institutionalized slavery in the early Vedic period, these men would presumably be subjugated rival soldiers, who are perhaps incorporated into the victor's clan and fighting force through a treaty or necessity. In these examples, the term

vīrá is thus used to designate males who are under the control of wealthy individuals in high social and political positions, and who strive to increase their material capital and man-power in competition or battle.

Like previous examples, two book 1 stanzas highlight the importance of participating in ritual performances, living a long life, and controlling strong males:

> ṚV.1.53.11: *yá udṛ́cīndra devágopāḥ sákhāyas te śivátamā ásāma, tvā́ṃ stoṣāma tváyā suvírā drā́ghīya ā́yuḥ prataráṃ dádhānāḥ.*
>
> "O Indra, at the conclusion [of the rite] we will have the protection of the gods and be your most auspicious partners. We will praise you, through you we are well manned, establishing for ourselves a longer more extensive lifetime."
>
> ṚV.1.125.1: *prātā́ rátnam prātarítvā dadhāti táṃ cikitvā́n pratigṛ́hyā ní dhatte, téna prajā́ṃ vardháyamāna ā́yū rāyás póṣeṇa sacate suvíraḥ.*
>
> "In the morning, the one who comes early establishes a fortune, and after accepting it the knowledgeable one sets him down. With it, he is increasing [his] progeny, [his] lifetime; being well manned, he is accompanied by the thriving of [his] wealth."

In the first stanza, the poet approaches Indra for his partnership. In turn, the war god enables the ritual participants' control of males, and this grants them a long life. The second stanza opens a hymn in which the poet praises chieftain Svanaya's ritual gifts (*dānastuti*). The "fortune" (*rátna*) is the chieftain's payment for the ritual performance. Through this payment, he is able symbolically (through his proxy poet-priest) to strengthen his progeny, life, and wealth. Given this, the "good *vīrá-*" in both examples may refer to the sacrificers' sons or a retinue of warriors, or both.

In closing this section we need to consider a signature line that appears only at the conclusion of book 2, Gṛtsamāda family hymns.[61] It may suggest that the men qualified as *suvíra-* have speaking privileges in certain rites and this depends on their control of competent warriors:

> ṚV.2.1.16d: *bṛhád vadema vidáthe suvírāḥ.*
>
> "Being well manned, we would speak aloft in the distribution ceremony."

In two instances in which this line appears, the *suvíra-* appear in collocation with patrons (*sūrí-*).[62] In four instances, the speaker seeks a munificent

benefactor (*maghávan*).[63] Elsewhere, *suvíra-* are identified as "munificent" (*maghávan-*).[64] The terms *suvíra*, *sūrí*, and *maghávan* are thus closely related. This indicates that in the above line, *suvíra-* refers to wealthy patrons, who either speak for themselves or have their poet-priests speak for them in the "distribution ceremony" (*vidátha*). The patrons could even be acting as poet-priests themselves.[65] According to Thieme (1949: 35–49), the term *vidátha* refers to different forms of ritualized distribution and allocation, whether in the form of oblations, prizes, spoils of war, commands, or the arrangement of cosmic phenomena. The *vidátha* takes place as a component of the larger *sóma* ritual or perhaps stands for the entire ritual synecdochically. It is noteworthy then that several poets praise the role and ideals of brave men in this specific rite.[66] The association of *vīrá-* with the *vidátha* perhaps underscores the expectation placed on brave men to distribute wealth in ritual performances. Moreover, we can see one of the ways that Ṛgvedic poets ensure that wealthy patrons signal their control of men in ritual performances. That is to say, it is only in rituals that prominent men can affirm their virility, dominance, and man-power; and it is only through payments to ritual practitioners that this can be done.

In all these examples, poets envision that being in control of males facilitates the acquisition of wealth, prosperity, and a long life, while securing victory in martial exploits.[67] The individuals qualified as *suvíra-* are wealthy patrons (*sūrí-*, *maghávan-*). In many cases, they actively speak in rituals or have their poet-priests speak for them; and in some instances these may be the same individuals. Kuiper (1960: 221, 238) concludes that rich patrons may have personified Indra because of the shared expectations placed on them to distribute wealth. What is more, such wealth may have been accumulated in competitions, such as verbal debates, gambling, chariot races, or open warfare (Kuiper 1960: 239–240). The point here is that ritual participants consistently objectify males of all ages as commodities to be controlled by their fathers or by wealthy lords. Of course, male offspring or able-bodied men provide such individuals with prestige and the means to protect their assets, continue their lineage, and overcome others in battle.[68] The term *suvíra* thus qualifies fatherly lords in privileged economic and political positions who control males and seek to performatively state this in rituals. Its use highlights a hierarchal relationship embedded in a patriarchal ideology wherein sons and retained warriors are placed under the control of the three masculine gods, Indra, Agni, and Soma. In the human world, this relationship parallels the authority of wealthy men who value male offspring and competent fighters.[69] Moreover, at the level of discourse, Āryan men are given few options but to align themselves with other men and to place themselves under the control of patriarchal figures. This

appears to reflect a social reality wherein males of all ages must belong to extended families or bands of warriors, and a man's worth is defined by his allegiance to a wealthy clan lord or chieftain. Indeed, as we will shortly see, this allegiance is a significant mark of social capital. These examples also highlight the reciprocal relationship between ritual practitioners and patrons as the acquisition of males depends on the gods and, of course, poet-priests to perform the rituals to mediate them, yet in turn poets depend on the wealth of patrons. Ritual practitioners need patronage, and they secure it by ritually affirming the virile standing of their benefactors. One poet even states that a man who does not offer sacrifices will fail to gain able-bodied warriors for his clan, yet (the poet says) if he sets his mind to performing rituals, his community will prosper.[70]

III: A Wealth of Man-Power (suvírya)

Ṛgvedic poet-priests further construct and reproduce a ritualized patriarchal economy by consistently correlating males with material wealth. As Pinault (2002a) has pointed out, poets objectify *vīrá-* as highly prized commodities.[71] The possession of sons and other men defined in tough manly terms is a symbol of wealth and social standing. Consider several lines to Agni from family book poets:

> ṚV.6.5.7b: *aśyā́ma rayíṃ rayivaḥ suvíram.*
>
> "May we obtain wealth, O wealthy one, consisting of good men."
>
> ṚV.6.16.29a: *suvíraṃ rayím ā́ bhara.*
>
> "Bring wealth here consisting of good men."
>
> ṚV.7.1.5a: *dā́ no agne dhiyā́ rayíṃ suvíraṃ.*
>
> "Through insight, O Fire, give to us wealth consisting of good men."

Geldner (1951, 2: 98, 111, 180) translates *suvíra* in these examples as "rich in good sons or children." While the poets may want male offspring, such children are defined in androcentric terms as healthy, strong, and courageous warriors. In this vein, an early poet directs his ritual activities to the goddess Dawn to gain such males and implies that their acquisition will bring social prestige:

> ṚV.6.65.6cd, to Dawn: *suvíraṃ rayíṃ gṛṇaté rirīhy urugāyám ádhi dhehi śrávo naḥ.*

> "Grant wealth consisting of good men to the singer. Establish upon us wide-ranging fame."[72]

The patriarchal commodification of males is further seen in the use of the derivative noun *suvírya*. Grassmann (1996 [1873]: 1552) has already noted that more often than not, it appears in juxtaposition with terms for wealth and prosperity. Given this, it can signify an abundance of men as a form of wealth; material wealth acquired by men; a man's virility to produce male progeny or control men; or the power that comes with able-bodied men.[73] What poets intend *suvírya* to mean in its numerous appearances, however, is ambiguous. On the one hand, it can be translated in a concrete sense as "a bounty of good men, abundant fit males." But on the other hand, it can refer to a more abstract concept denoting "sure strength of men, manly power, virile manliness." To navigate this ambiguity, I have favored translating it as "man-power," which while imprecise, nevertheless captures in English both its concrete and abstract meanings at once. Consider a stanza from the oldest layer of the *Ṛgveda*:

> ṚV.4.51.10: *rayíṃ divo duhitaro vibhātíḥ prajā́vantaṃ yachatāsmā́su devīḥ, syonā́d ā́ vaḥ pratibúdhyamānāḥ suvíryasya pátayaḥ syāma*.
>
> "O daughters of heaven, shining forth, offer wealth full of progeny among us, O goddesses. Being awakened here from a pleasant state for you, may we be lords of man-power."

The phrase *suvíryasya pátayaḥ syāma* in the final line is repeated in four other instances.[74] It either underscores the lords' control of competent fighters or expresses their desire to sire sons, or both at once: in the initial hemistich, the speaker certainly wants wealth in the form of offspring.[75]

While it is apt that goddesses grant male offspring, poet-priests also approach the ritual Fire in order to secure males (we recall at ṚV.2.1.9 that ritual participants call Agni their father). Consider a stanza from the oldest layer:

> ṚV.5.26.5: *yájamānāya sunvatá ā́gne suvíryam vaha, devaír ā́ satsi barhíṣi*.
>
> "To the sacrificer who presses, O Fire, convey here man-power. With the gods sit here on the sacrificial grass."

The poet may want Agni to bestow on his sacrificer brave men or virility so as to sire sons. Consider three other examples from middle-layer family books:

ṚV.2.2.10ab: *vayám agne árvatā vā suvíryam bráhmaṇā vā citayemā jánām̐ áti.*

"O Fire, may we [acquire] man-power through a race horse or distinguish ourselves beyond the tribes through a sacred formulation."

ṚV.3.10.3: *sá ghā yás te dádāśati samídhā jātávedase, só agne dhatte suvíryaṃ sá puṣyati.*

"The one who will offer ritual service to you, Jātavedas, with kindling, he, O Fire, establishes for himself man-power, [and] he prospers."

ṚV.7.16.12cd: *dádhāti rátnaṃ vidhaté suvíryam agnír jánāya dāśúṣe.*

"Fire establishes a fortune, man-power, to the one offering worship, to the tribesman who offers ritual service."

In all these examples, poets indicate that through ritual performances, men seek to affirm their masculine potency and perhaps even attest their possession of progeny or fighting men (note that in the first example, if we take the poet literally, the acquisition of manly power involves a horse race). Poet-priests address the ritual Fire so that the deity will symbolically confirm the sacrificer's virility in successfully interacting with the gods and in fathering or controlling healthy strong males.[76] This is the case elsewhere as Agni is instructed to confer *suvírya* and "lofty fame" (*śrávo bṛhát*) on ritual participants as the charioteer of the rites.[77] Agni is considered to be the master of *suvírya*, great prosperity, and wealth in the form of good offspring and cattle.[78] Fire also seeks from the gods "majestic and lofty man-power" for his officiant.[79] As these examples show, Agni substantiates a man's masculine identity, and this is attested by his performance of rituals and his ability to sire male offspring or command warriors.[80] For this reason, the ritual Fire is not only a dominant symbol of Āryan manhood, but also a key symbol of the patriarchal dominance that the ritual tradition has over familial and marital relationships. It is through the ritual Fire that Ṛgvedic poet-priests ritualize a man's—and indirectly a woman's—responsibility to produce male offspring. As such, Agni can simply be instructed to "grant wealth, man-power."[81] A nonfamily book poet reproduces similar statements about Agni and Soma's role in acquiring males through ritual performances:

ṚV.1.93.2-3: *ágnīṣomā yó adyá vām idáṃ vácaḥ saparyáti, tásmai dhattaṃ suvíryaṃ gávām póṣaṃ sváśvyam. ágnīṣomā yá ā́huti yó vāṃ dā́śād dhavíṣkṛtim, sá prajáyā suvíryaṃ víśvam ā́yur vy àśnavat.*

> "O Fire and Soma, the one who today services this speech for you two, for him establish man-power, a thriving of cattle and horse-power. O Fire and Soma, the one who will ritually offer the poured oblation, and who will offer the sacrificial preparation, he will thoroughly obtain through [his] progeny man-power throughout [his] whole lifetime."[82]

This poet explicitly connects the acquisition of *suvírya* with material wealth (in the form of cattle and horses) and progeny (*prajā́*),[83] and he also seems to state that the sacrificer's offspring will become his warriors. Consider another non-family book poet who directs his request to Indra:

> ṚV.1.129.7a-c: *vanéma tád dhótrayā citántyā vanéma rayíṃ rayivaḥ suvíryaṃ raṇváṃ sántaṃ suvíryam.*
>
> "May we win this with an excellent invocation. May we win wealth, O wealthy one, man-power, [wealth] that is pleasurable; a surplus, man-power."[84]

It is once again unclear whether the wealth is men or acquired by men. Nevertheless, the use of *suvíra* and *suvírya* indicates that wealth, virility, and males are highly prized, overlapping commodities.[85] The examples presented in the last three sections present us with a ritualized economy wherein males are defined as commodities to be commanded, subjugated, sired, or simply wished for, and this is all legitimized by the three manly gods Agni, Indra, and Soma in ritual performances. In their capacity to be *vīrá-*, men in ancient India are therefore objectified and valued for their subservience to fathers, lords, and ultimately the ritual tradition. The use of the terms *suvíra* and *suvírya* attests a deep-seated patriarchal ideology of domination over male children and more mature men within a ritualized system of reciprocity and ownership. Lords, patrons, and fathers are expected to sire sons and control men, and through ritual performances they define themselves as powerful and potent. Moreover, males—whether sons or competent fighters—are defined by the value they bring to their fathers or masters from the mere fact of being born or from their success in battle. It is reasonable to assume that the more males a man possesses, the more he can garner prestige and solidify his status in society.[86] More importantly, Ṛgvedic ritual practitioners propagate an ideology that intrinsically connects a man's physical well-being, prosperity, and virility with ritual performances. It is absolutely necessary that Āryan men perform rituals because without the support of Indra, Agni, and Soma, they are impotent. This brings us to the last way in which poets characterize the role of *vīrá-* and it

should be no surprise: men capture wealth in battle, and for this they receive fame.

The Economy of Battle

I: Wealth and War

The next three sections will consider the way in which the martial role of a *vīrá* is constructed and embedded in a ritualized exchange of material and symbolic capital between poet-priests and warriors. According to poets, this economy is based on cattle raids and warfare—wealth comes from blood and violence.[87] As we will see, to be true *vīrá-*, Āryan men should conduct cattle raids and fight battles to capture spoils for ritualized distribution. Poets thus fame warriors for their wealth-generating exploits, yet in doing so, ensure that men participate in rituals to legitimate their martial deeds. Given this, the following sections will also draw out some of the ritual strategies that poet-priests employ to place Āryan men in a hierarchal relationship with certain gods, while making ritual performances a necessary component of their identities.

Let us begin by examining the way in which Ṛgvedic poet-priests define the role of a *vīrá* in accordance with his *vīryà* in terms of wealth and largesse. A poet from the oldest layer explicitly underscores the economic expectation placed on Indra in his role as a *vīrá*:

> ṚV.4.24.1cd: *dadír hí vīró gṛṇaté vásūni sá gópatir niṣṣídhāṃ no janāsaḥ.*
>
> "Indeed, the brave man [*vīrá*] is the giver of treasures to the singer; he is the herdsman of our successes, O peoples."

We note here the appearance of the term *vásu* ("treasures, goods") in the plural. Other poets consistently use this term to define the type of wealth that *vīrá-* should accumulate.[88] For example, two poets from the middle layer venerate Indra in his role as a *vīrá* for finding treasure:

> ṚV.2.13.11: *supravācanáṃ táva vīra vīryàṃ yád ékena krátunā vindáse vásu, jātúṣṭhirasya prá váyaḥ sáhasvato yā́ cakártha séndra víśvāsy ukthyàḥ.*
>
> "O brave man, your manliness [*vīryà*] is well proclaimed forth, when you find treasure due to [your] single resolve. The vitality of the one born sturdy, possessing dominating strength, [is proclaimed] forth.

> The things that this one, that you have done, O Indra, for all of them you are worthy of recitations."
>
> ṚV.3.55.20: *mahí sám airac camvà samīcí ubhé té asya vásunā nyṛ̀ṣṭe, śṛṇvé vīró vindámāno vásūni mahád devā́nām asuratvám ékam.*
>
> "He [Tvaṣṭṛ] raised the two great Camū-cups together in order to be united. Both of them are overflowing with his treasure. The one finding treasures [Indra] is famed as a brave man [*vīrá*]. Great is the Asura-ship of the gods alone."[89]

In both these examples, in his role as a *vīrá*, Indra is praised for his ability to find treasure (*vásu*). What is more, these two examples highlight one of the fundamental social realities and ritual strategies we will encounter shortly; that is, that human warriors receive a ritualized endorsement in the form of fame for their masculine and martial exploits. Poets are nevertheless clear that the war god cannot keep the treasure for himself; he must distribute it among ritual participants, and this would be equally true for human *vīrá*-.[90] For example, a late poet underscores Indra's martial expertise and generosity, which benefits a sacrificer who presses *sóma*:

> ṚV.1.81.2: *ási hí vīra sényó 'si bhū́ri parādadíḥ, ási dabhrásya cid vṛdhó yájamānāya śikṣasi sunvaté bhū́ri te vásu.*
>
> "Indeed, O brave man, you embody the army. You are the one who overgives abundantly. You are even the strengthener of the paltry. You strive to work hard for the sacrificer, for the presser your treasure is abundant."

In late Vālakhilya hymns, two poets describe Indra in similar terms as a rich, generous, and powerful warrior:

> ṚV.8.49.6ab: *ugráṃ ná vīráṃ námasópa sedima víbhūtim ákṣitāvasum.*
>
> "With homage we sat near [you], as if a powerful brave man [*vīrá*], the prominent one of imperishable treasure."
>
> ṚV.8.50.6a: *prá vīrám ugráṃ víviciṃ dhanaspṛ́taṃ víbhūtiṃ rā́dhaso maháḥ, udríva vajrinn avató vasutvanā́ sádā pīpetha dāśúṣe.*
>
> "Proclaim the powerful brave man [*vīrá*], the discriminating one who earns the stakes, the prominent one of great generosity. Like a cistern full of water, O mace wielder, you always swelled treasures for the one offering ritual service."[91]

As these examples indicate, across all layers of the *Ṛgveda* poets expect that as a *vīrá*, Indra will accumulate treasure, *vásu*, for ritual distribution—the last poet even acknowledges Indra's "great generosity" (*rā́dhaso mahā́ḥ*). In this vein, a book 8 poet succinctly defines Indra's worth as a *vīrá* in charitable terms, while also moralizing his expectation to give by qualifying it as a "good intention" (*sumatí*).[92]

Since Ṛgvedic poets define the role of a brave man in terms of wealth and generosity, it should be no surprise that the abstract quality of "manliness" is also defined in terms of wealth-generating exploits and largesse.[93] Consider a nonfamily book stanza in which the poet calls Indra a munificent champion who is prepared to exercise his manly power:

> ṚV.8.61.18, to Indra: *prabhaṅgí śū́ro maghávā tuvímaghaḥ sámmiślo vīryā̀ya kám, ubhā́ te bāhū́ vṛ́ṣaṇā śatakrato ní yā́ vájram mimikṣátuḥ.*
>
> "The shattering champion [*śū́ra*], the munificent one is vigorously munificent, prepared for a manly act [*vīryà*]. Both your arms are bulls, O one of a hundred resolves, both of which are firmly fixed around the mace."

We see that *vīryà* applies to more than just a *vīrá* since this poet expects that as a *śū́ra*, Indra will display his courageous manly power, particularly by being "vigorously munificent" (*tuvímaghaḥ*) and by flexing his bull-like arms around his mace. A late poet also invokes his war god as munificent, instructs him to appease his praiser, and states that his manly power dominates the cosmos:

> ṚV.1.57.5: *bhū́ri ta indra vīryàṃ táva smasy asyá stotúr maghavan kā́mam ā́ pṛṇa, ánu te dyaúr bṛhatí vīryàm mama iyáṃ ca te pṛthiví nema ójase.*
>
> "O Indra, your manliness [*vīryà*] is abundant; we are yours. O munificent one, fulfill the wish of the praiser. Lofty heaven has been measured out according to your manliness [*vīryà*] and the earth here bowed before your power."

In the first line, the poet perhaps qualifies Indra's *vīryà* as "abundant" (*bhū́ri*) to emphasize the fact that it opens up the universe in the third line. Nevertheless, while the adjective *bhū́ri* carries a spatial meaning, it often modifies types of wealth (compare its adjectival and adverbial uses at ṚV.1.81.2, and its use in the compound *bhūridā́varīṃ* at ṚV.8.2.21ab; both cited above). It may be the case that Indra's *vīryà* is abundant here because the manly god is so good at

capturing wealth—he is called "munificent" (voc. *maghavan*) in the second line.

Several poets use *vīryà* and *bhū́ri* together to signal Indra's wealth-generating exploits. For example, a family book poet depicts a scenario in which Indra, acting out of his manly disposition, assails the strongholds of enemies to capture wealth:

> ṚV.3.54.15: *índro víśvair vīryaìḥ pátyamāna ubhé ā́ paprau ródasī mahitvā́, puraṃdaró vṛtrahā́ dhṛṣṇúṣeṇaḥ saṃgṛ́bhyā na ā́ bharā bhū́ri paśváḥ.*
>
> "Indra, acting as lord due to all [his] manly acts and qualities [*vīryà-*], filled both world halves through [his] greatness. As the piercer of forts, the smasher of obstacles, whose missile [or army] is daring, after rounding them up bring here to us an abundance of livestock."

For this poet, Indra's raw virility substantiates his political station and cosmic supremacy, and it also enables him to capture "an abundance of cattle" (*bhū́ri paśváḥ*). Consider a late poet, who depicts a similar image:

> ṚV.1.103.5: *tád asyedám paśyatā bhū́ri puṣṭáṃ śrád índrasya dhattana vīryā̀ya, sá gā́ avindat só avindad áśvān sá óṣadhīḥ só apáḥ sá vánāni.*
>
> "Look here at this abundant prosperity of his. Place trust in Indra's manliness. He found cows, he found horses, he [found medicinal and edible] plants, he [found] waters, he [found] trees."

In this case, Indra not only provides prosperity on account of his manly character, but also secures natural resources. For this reason, the poet commands others to trust Indra's manly ability to provide riches and safe territory. In a similar manner, a late Vālakhilya poet explicitly talks of Indra's *vīryà* in economic terms:

> ṚV.8.55.1: *bhū́rí índrasya vīryàṃ vy ákhyam abhy ā́yati, rā́dhas te dasyave vṛka.*
>
> "Indeed, I have surveyed Indra's abundant manliness. Your generosity will come over here, O Wolf to the Barbarian."

Indra's manly power is qualified as abundant to underscore the necessity for wealth-generating exploits, which this poet also signals with the term *rā́dhas* ("generosity"). Moreover, Indra's epithet here "Wolf to the Barbarian" (voc. *dasyave vṛka*) implies that such wealth has been acquired from conflict with the indigenous peoples. It is noteworthy that several other poets juxtapose the

terms *rā́dhas* and *vīryà*, as if to encode the value of generosity in Indra's very nature as a man (we recall at ṚV.8.50.6 that as a *vīrá*, Indra is praised for his great generosity):

> ṚV.7.22.8: *nú cin nú te mányamānasya dasmód aśnuvanti mahimā́nam ugra, ná vīryàm indra te ná rā́dhaḥ.*
>
> "However, O wondrous one, these [men] never achieved your greatness, as you are being thought of, O powerful one, nor your manliness, O Indra, nor your generosity."
>
> ṚV.8.24.21: *yásyā́mitāni vīryà ná rā́dhaḥ páryetave, jyótir ná víśvam abhy asti dákṣiṇā.*
>
> "[Indra is the one] whose manly acts are without measure, whose generosity cannot be surpassed, whose sacrificial fee presides over all, as if a light."[94]

Ṛgvedic poets construct the role of a *vīrá* in accordance with his *vīryà* in terms of wealth and largesse. Both poets also say that men act like Indra, yet cannot match his greatness, manly activity, and generosity. While generosity is not exclusively expected of a *vīrá*, munificence is one of the two dominant ways in which this role is defined.[95] And if Indra's example is his model, a brave man should fully embody his manly disposition by accumulating wealth in various forms from martial excursions. That is to say, to be true *vīrá-*, men should not only put themselves in harm's way, but also share the spoils of war. We can see this expectation in the following example as an early poet projects the role of a *vīrá* onto his sacrificer, while describing him in manly and charitable terms:

> ṚV.6.53.2, to Pūṣan: *abhí no náryaṃ vásu vīrám práyatadakṣiṇam, vāmáṃ gṛhápatiṃ naya.*
>
> "Lead us over to a manly treasure, a brave man whose sacrificial fee has been held forth, a desirable house lord."

It is difficult to know whether the poet is stroking the ego of a real individual to get paid or is expressing a general desire for a wealthy client. In either case, this poet calls his sacrificer at once a manly treasure, a liberal warrior, and a favored house lord. He also defines his sacrificer in masculine terms, particularly as a *vīrá*, so as to underscore the role expected of this man. Manliness and generosity are thus overlapping qualities for ritually active Āryan men.

This brings us to one of the key ways in which poet-priests define the relationship between masculine gods like Indra and human *vīrá-*. We can of course infer that if Indra's example is representative of Āryans, then ritual participants expect that men will accumulate and distribute wealth in the same way as their war god does, namely from violent excursions such as capturing new livestock, pasturage, provisions, and wealth. We can clearly see the way in which Ṛgvedic poet-priests align the identities and expectations of men with their war god as an early poet indicates that human warriors act like Indra and accumulate wealth from cattle raiding:

> ṚV.6.35.2: *kárhi svit tád indra yán nṝ́bhir nṝ́n vīraír vīrā́n nīḷáyāse*
> *jáyājín, tridhā́tu gā́ ádhi jayāsi góṣv índra dyumnáṃ svàrvad dhehy asmé.*
>
> "O Indra, when will it be that you will place in your nest [our] men with [your] men, [our] brave men with [your] brave men. Win [our] battles! In the contests for cattle, you will win cattle three times over. O Indra, establish among us a sunlike majesty."

The exact meaning of the denominative hapax verb "to place in one's nest" (*√nīḷay/nīḍay*) is unclear. According to Jamison (1983: 85), it refers "to the comradeship of the people with Indra and his forces in the battle for booty."[96] If his men are the warlike Maruts, then it seems that Indra should treat human warriors the same way he treats his loyal band of warriors, by placing them under his command or protection. Hence, this poet-priest establishes an intimate relationship with Indra and the Maruts to make sure his warriors are successful in their cattle raids;[97] and in aligning his warriors' identities with the Maruts, the poet places their martial activity under the command of Indra.[98] A late poet reproduces a similar image in the final layer:

> ṚV.10.103.7: *abhí gotrā́ṇi sáhasā gā́hamāno 'dayó vīráḥ śatámanyur*
> *índraḥ, duścyavanáḥ pṛtanāṣā́ḷ ayudhyò 'smā́kaṃ sénā avatu prá yutsú.*
>
> "The merciless brave man, Indra, whose rage is a hundredfold, is plunging through the cow pens with dominating strength. Let the one who is unflinching, dominating in battles, unable to be fought against, help our armies in wars."

Given the clan-based social and political structure of early Vedic culture (see Witzel 1997b), the "armies" (*sénā-*) most likely refers to tribal warriors or raiding parties rather than a standing military force of professional soldiers in a state-run militia. Like the previous example, this stanza highlights the martial

role of a *vīrá* in capturing cattle and waging war. The poet summons Indra to help his warriors in cattle raids and battle, while attributing his warriors' victories to Indra's presence and martial prowess. Another poet states that the god Soma possesses *vīryà*, and for this reason he will aid men seeking wealth in cattle raids:

> ṚV.1.91.23: *devéna no mánasā deva soma rāyó bhāgáṃ sahasāvann abhí yudhya, mā́ tvā́ tanad íśiṣe vīryàsyobháyebhyaḥ prá cikitsā gáviṣṭau.*
>
> "With the mind of a god, O god Soma, fight for a portion of wealth for us, O dominating one. Do not let (the atmosphere) stretch over you. You are master of manliness. Be attentive to both (gods and humans) in their quest for cattle."[99]

The idiom "master of manliness" (*íśiṣe vīryàsya*) parallels many other instances in which √*īś* ("to master; be master of") appears with various forms of wealth in the genitive case.[100] While the poet explicitly states his desire for wealth in the opening lines, the use of *vīryà* here underscores Soma's manly ability to aid men in capturing wealth in the form of cattle.[101]

We have already seen that poets associate *vīryà* with various martial and political roles (*vīrá*, *śū́ra*, *rā́jan*). A family book poet instructs Indra to exercise his manly power, and he indicates that *vīryà* applies to more than just *vīrá*:

> ṚV.2.30.10, to Indra: *asmā́kebhiḥ sátvabhiḥ śūra śū́rair vīryà̄ kṛdhi yā́ni te kártvāni, jyóg abhūvann ánudhūpitāso hatví téṣām ā́ bharā no vásūni.*
>
> "O champion, with our true men, with our champions, perform manly acts [*vīryà*-] which are yours to perform. For a long time they have been puffed up; after smashing them, bring their treasures here to us."

The past participle *ánudhūpita* ("puffed up") is unclear. Figuratively, it could mean that the enemies are either haughty or bewildered.[102] In a more literal vein, Geldner (1951, 1: 314) thinks that it alludes to a siege of a fortress during which the enemies were "smoked out." In either case, Indra is called a "champion" (voc. *śūra*; I will discuss this word in more detail in the next chapter) and performs manly deeds to capture treasures for ritual distribution. Since the term *vásu* once again refers to plunder or booty captured in martial excursions, its use in all the examples above likely signals this reality. In other words, in all the cases in which Indra is praised as a *vīrá* for finding or distributing *vásu*, the poets are referring to the spoils of war. In addition, the poet

once again subsumes the martial identities of his expert fighters under Indra by ensuring that they work in conjunction with their war god. Hence, when they place the activities and identities of Āryan men under the auspices of Indra, Agni, and Soma, Ṛgvedic poet-priests are both promoting the importance of their ritual performances and maintaining ideological control over warriors. In turn, through ritual performances, martially inclined men receive from ritual practitioners and the gods legitimization for their masculinity and martial exploits.

This brings us full circle back to the active role that ritual practitioners play in constructing and defining androcentric relationships, as they do more than just assert that men should partner with Indra in battle. Two family book poets highlight the strategic way in which they ritualize their role in Indra's martial exploits by strengthening their war god's *vīryà* so that he will distribute treasure (*vásu*):

> ṚV.2.22.3: *sākáṃ jātáḥ krátunā sākám ójasā vavakṣitha sākáṃ vṛddhó vīryaìḥ sāsahír mṛ́dho vícarṣaṇiḥ, dā́tā rā́dha stuvaté kā́myaṃ vásu saínaṃ saścad devó devā́ṃ satyám índraṃ satyá índuḥ.*
>
> "As soon as born you were empowered at once with resolve, at once with power; at once strengthened with manly powers [*vīryà-*]. Keeping the boundary people apart, you repeatedly dominated the negligent ones. [You are] the giver of benefit and desirable treasure to the praiser: one accompanies the other—god upon god, the real droplet [of *sóma*] upon the real Indra."
>
> ṚV.6.30.1ab: *bhū́ya íd vāvṛdhe vīryā̀yaṁ éko ajuryó dayate vásūni.*
>
> "Still more greatly he has been strengthened for manliness [*vīryà*]. This unaging one alone gives treasures."

As we will see in chapter 4, the process of strengthening constitutes a major ritual strategy wherein poet-priests demonstrate their mastery over Indra and human men while directly investing themselves and their rituals in the martial exploits of warriors, whether divine or human.[103] In these examples, poets state that in ritually strengthening Indra they expect to receive wealth from their war god. Another family book poet foregrounds Indra masculine empowerment and largesse:

> ṚV.3.36.5: *mahā́ṁ ugró vāvṛdhe vīryā̀ya samā́cakre vṛṣabháḥ kā́vyena, índro bhágo vājadā́ asya gā́vaḥ prá jāyante dákṣiṇā asya pūrvíḥ.*

> "The great powerful one is strengthened for manliness [*vīryà*]. The bull is perfected with poetry. Indra is the apportioner. His cows give prizes. Many sacrificial fees are born of him."

This poet empowers Indra so that the war god will exercise his manly power, and so that he and his cows will distribute wealth, particularly in the form of ritual payments (*dákṣiṇā-*). Like *vásu*, the term *vā́ja* in the compound *vājadā́* ("giving prizes") could literally be translated as the "prize of victory" or the "spoils of war," as it consistently refers to wealth won in competition or battles.[104] As a matter of fact, the cows here may signal Indra's success in a cattle raid.

The role of a *vīrá* is therefore equally defined in martial and economic terms. As a *vīrá*, Indra accrues wealth from competition and war, yet poet-priests stipulate that he should share it among his worshippers. Ṛgvedic poets consistently communicate a dominant ideology that if decoded by Āryan men, expects that they will act like Indra by conducting cattles raids and war to capture and share the spoils among fellow ritualists. On the one hand, it may very well be the case that in many instances, poets merely sing of Indra's mythical exploits and character to demonstrate their own masculinity. They may also be displaying their ability to foster a relationship with Indra, to prove their worth to patrons. On the other hand, poets repeatedly state that human warriors should partner with their war god in martial endeavors. This indicates that ritual practitioners make sure that the identities and victories of men are dependent on Indra's presence. In ascribing human victories to the war god's powerful presence and expertise, Ṛgvedic poet-priests are strategically able to subsume the identities of men under the auspices of manly gods like Indra, and this allows them to influence the activities of warriors for their own and presumably their community's economic benefit. Ṛgvedic *sóma* rituals are thus not only a part of the technology of war; they also function as a core component in the exchange of economic and symbolic capital between all ritual participants in ancient India, and ultimately in defining the quality and makeup of clan and tribal membership. It is for these reasons that poet-priests are actively invested in sustaining and promoting this economy of symbolic and martial practices, since, in the end, such practices maintain their communities.

II: A Poet-Priest's Reputation

In this section, we need to examine in more depth the complex relationship between ritual participants with regard to social standing and reputation. Scholars have long recognized that *sóma* rituals are a key arena in which fame

and prestige are won and lost in early Vedic society.[105] There are numerous examples in which ritual participants seek "fame" (*śrávas*) for themselves, their patrons, and their clan, and, more often than not, Indra, Agni, or Soma bestows this renown upon them. We have also seen that masculine qualities are equally important forms of symbolic capital. This is evident in the fact that across all layers of the text, poets idiomatically "proclaim" (*prá √vac*) Indra's manly deeds (*vīryà-*).[106] For example:

> ṚV.1.32.1ab: *índrasya nú vīryāṇi prá vocaṃ yā́ni cakā́ra prathamā́ni vajrí.*
>
> "I will now proclaim Indra's manly acts, those foremost ones that the mace wielder has performed."[107]
>
> ṚV.4.32.10: *prá te vocāma vīryà yā́ mandasāná ā́rujaḥ, púro dā́sīr abhítya.*
>
> "We will proclaim your manly acts, when you, being exhilarated, broke through the barbarian forts, after confronting [them]."
>
> ṚV.8.62.3: *áhitena cid árvatā jīrádānuḥ siṣāsati, pravā́cyam indra tát táva vīryàṇi kariṣyató bhadrā́ índrasya rātáyaḥ.*
>
> "Even with an unproven race horse, he, who brings lively water drops, strives to win. O Indra, it is to be proclaimed, when you will perform your manly acts. Auspicious are Indra's gifts."

As these examples demonstrate, poets publicly glorify Indra's manly qualities, martial deeds, and acts of generosity by way of a verbal convention (*prá √vac*), and in turn the war god presumably receives fame in having his exploits formally declared in a ritual performance. What then does the process of faming Indra say about the relationship between ritual participants and between them and their gods? Consider a late poet who employs the near identical forms *prá √vac* and *prá √brū* ("to pronounce") in two stanzas to Indra:

> ṚV.10.112.1: *índra píba pratikāmáṃ sutásya prātaḥsāvás táva hí pūrvápītiḥ, hárṣasva hántave śūra śátrūn ukthébhiṣ ṭe vīryà prá bravāma.*
>
> "O Indra, drink of the pressed (*sóma*) at [your] pleasure, for the early morning pressing, the first drink belongs to you. Be excited for smashing rivals, O champion, with recitations we will pronounce your manly acts."[108]
>
> RV.10.112.8: *prá ta indra pūrvyā́ṇi prá nūnáṃ vīryà vocam prathamā́ kṛtā́ni, satīnámanyur aśrathāyo ádriṃ suvedanā́m akṛṇor bráhmaṇe gā́m.*

> "O Indra, I will proclaim your previous manly acts, proclaim now the foremost ones that have been performed. You, of real rage, loosened the stone; you made the cow easy to find for the sacred formulation."

In the first stanza, this poet invokes Indra for an attack on enemies; in the second, he apparaently alludes to Indra's mythic assault on the cosmic mountain to rescue captured cattle (see Schmidt 1968: 148). He also articulates the importance of Indra's martial activity in the mythologized past, as well as in the present context of his ritual performance. It may be the case that the poet intends his current proclamations to encourage the war god in his most immediate cosmic or terrestrial exploits. The poet also suggests that he participates in Indra's manly deeds insofar as his own "sacred formulation" (*bráhman*) plays a direct role in aiding Indra's quest to free imprisoned cattle. In proclaiming Indra's manly deeds, in presenting him with *sóma*, and in partnering with him in battle, the poet displays his own masculinity and courage; this may very well be the case for all the poets who proclaim the war god's manly exploits. If so, then poet-priests gain their own fame and manliness in proclaiming Indra's. It also seems to be the case that a poet-priest's fame is tied directly to his ability to summon Indra for an impending battle. Consider an early poet who asks Indra to bring fame to him and his people when he prepares for war:

> ṚV.6.31.5: *sá satyasatvan mahaté ráṇāya rátham á tiṣṭha tuvinṛmṇa bhīmám, yāhí prapathinn ávasópa madrík prá ca śruta śrāvaya carṣaṇíbhyaḥ.*
>
> "O true man who really exists, for great battle stand on [your] terrifying chariot, O one of potent manhood. Travel with help toward me, O far traveller, and, O famed one, make (me/us) famed for the boundary peoples."[109]

A nonfamily book poet also praises Indra for his powerful and generous nature, while indicating that the war god brings fame to his people after a successful martial campaign:

> ṚV.1.61.5: *asmā́ íd u sáptim iva śravasyéndrāyārkáṃ juhvà sám añje, vīráṃ dānaúkasaṃ vandádhyai purā́ṃ gūrtáśravasaṃ darmā́ṇam.*
>
> "As [one embellishes] a team [of horses] to win fame, to just this one, to Indra, I embellish the chant with [my] tongue to venerate the brave man accustomed to giving, splitter of strongholds whose fame is welcome."

It is obvious that Indra is famed for martial victories and, as we will see, this is a real incentive for human warriors. What these examples also suggest is that ritualists garner fame for themselves and their clan when they successfully summon and deploy Indra in battle, and in doing so they display their own masculinity.[110] Consider the following stanza, in which the same nonfamily book poet named Nodhas perhaps gains *vīryà* when he praises Indra:

> ṚV.1.61.14: *asyéd u bhiyā́ giráyaś ca dṛḷhā́ dyā́vā ca bhū́mā janúṣas tujete, úpo venásya jóguvāna oṇíṃ sadyó bhuvad vīryā̀ya nodhā́ḥ.*
>
> "Surely from fear of his birth, steadfast mountains, and heaven and earth thrust apart. Repeatedly calling out to the assistant of the pursuer [Indra], Nodhas will right now be present for manliness."[111]

By naming himself in his poem, the poet draws attention to his ritual act of summoning Indra. It is nevertheless unclear whether *vīryà* here refers to the poet's manliness or Indra's. Though Geldner (1951, 1: 79) states that Nodhas anticipates Indra's manly activity; it may equally be the case that the poet is deliberately ambiguous to highlight his possession of *vīryà* from persistently invoking his war god. In this context, Geldner notes that the following stanza to Soma explicitly attributes *vīryà* to ritual practitioners:

> ṚV.9.110.7: *tvé soma prathamā́ vṛktábarhiṣo mahé vā́jāya śrávase dhíyaṃ dadhuḥ, sá tváṃ no vīra vīryā̀ya codaya.*
>
> "In you, O Soma, the foremost ones who twisted the sacred grass established [their] insight for a great prize, for fame. Spur us on, O brave man, to manliness."

This poet states that ritual participants strive to gain wealth (*vā́ja*)—or more specifically the spoils of war—and fame (*śrávas*) for themselves by focusing their ritual knowledge and activity on Soma. The underlying practice seems to be that poet-priests demonstrate their insightful skill in purifying *sóma* so that it will be empowered and empowering. This is evident in the rest of the hymn as Soma conquers enemies in battle, captures the spoils of war, and is said to "place vitality, vigor" (11c: *vayodhā́ḥ*) in its drinker; that is, Indra. The poet also aptly signals Soma's anticipated martial character by calling him a *vīrá*. In asking Soma to encourage the courageous deeds or manly qualities of ritual participants, the poet perhaps wants manly power for himself and his fellow ritualists because they have prepared the concoction. The poet may also be suggesting that the divine draught will empower men so that they will carry out

manly deeds in conjunction with Indra. Ritual practitioners thus expect to receive wealth and fame by preparing *sóma* for Indra. And in singing Indra's praises and preparing his *sóma*, poet-priests also seek to demonstrate their own ritually and divinely inspired masculinity, as well as showing their investment in an economy based predominantly on the reciprocal exchange of prestige and the spoils of war. Āryan men thus lionize Indra's manly activity and power for their own and communal ends.

These observations can be further substantiated by the fact that Āryan men define themselves in masculine terms when they interact with their gods; we saw this in the previous chapter in relation to Indra and Agni. Poets from the oldest layer of the text explicitly state that men act as *vīrá-* when they praise Indra or prepare *sóma*. For example, *vīrá-* are called pressers of *sóma*, and they possibly drink it in conjunction with Indra.[112] In an explicitly ritual context, an Adhvaryu priest is called a *vīrá* when he brings *sóma* to Indra.[113] In another old hymn, Indra makes wide space for a *vīrá* who presses his *sóma* and is called "the maker of a manly *vīrá* for the one in control of all (or healthy) *vīrá-*."[114] While this reference is unclear, it seems that Indra will make a man out of a human warrior who is under the command of a lord or father. The poet may be insinuating that to become a real man, the *vīrá* in question should participate in rituals by pressing *sóma* for Indra and by following his war god's example. It is also noteworthy that a middle-layer poet instructs Indra's priestly alter ego Bṛhaspati to "Perform the sacrifice for yourself, O brave man."[115] All these examples indicate that men enact the manly and martial role of a *vīrá* when they ritually interact with Indra and *sóma*—indeed, it seems that they cannot conceive of themselves as anything but tough and warlike when they participate in ritual performances.

Ritualists also expect that men will maintain a manly identity in their interactions with Agni as an early poet states that only a *vīrá* should control the ritual Fire:

> ṚV.4.15.5: *ásya ghā vīrá ívato 'gnér īśīta mártyaḥ, tigmájambhasya mīḷhúṣaḥ.*
>
> "Only a mortal brave man should be master of this one here, of such a profound Fire, of this one who has sharp teeth, [though our] benefactor."

It seems that a man needs to be tough, since Agni may just bite. Several poets from the middle layer also highlight the relationship between Agni and men defined as *vīrá-*:

ṚV.8.23.19ab: *imáṃ ghā vīró amṛ́taṃ dūtáṃ kṛṇvīta mártyaḥ.*

"Indeed, may a mortal brave man make this immortal [Agni] his messenger."

ṚV.8.103.4: *prá yáṃ rāyé nínīṣasi márto yás te vaso dā́śat, sá vīráṃ dhatte agna ukthaśaṃsínaṃ tmánā sahasrapoṣíṇam.*

"The mortal whom you desire to lead forth for wealth, who ritually serves you, O treasure, he establishes for himself a brave man, O Fire, who articulates recitations, who prospers a thousandfold on his own accord."

In the first hemistich, the man who interacts with the ritual Fire is explicitly called a *vīrá*. In the second stanza, it seems that Agni offers guidance to a devoted sacrificer so that he will acquire wealth, and this promotes his ability to gain a *vīrá*, perhaps a son, who will also actively participate in rituals for his own prosperity. These examples suggest that Ṛgvedic poet-priests not only demonstrate their masculinity by ritually interacting with manly gods like Indra, Agni, and Soma; they also reserve the right to maintain such a relationship for men who are considered to be powerful, brave, and manly in the first place. This is also evident elsewhere as *vīrá-* of good birth (*sujātá-*) surround or attend (*pári √car*) to Agni,[116] and as a guest in the home of a rich (*revánt*) *vīrá*, Agni gives a desirable reward (*várya*) to the clan.[117] In all these examples, poet-priests and sacrificers metaphorically define themselves as tough, virile men when they engage in ritual activities, particularly when they interact with Indra, Agni, and Soma. Since there are no absolute distinctions between ritual and martial realms, as both overlap in early Vedic culture, it may also be the case that such individuals not only cast themselves in a manly warlike role for symbolic reasons, but also that they affirm their commitment to the ideals of being a warrior. Āryan men thus symbolically align their identities with the dominant masculine role of a *vīrá* to portray their ritual activity and, ultimately, themselves, in masculine and martial terms.[118] Concomitant with that, ritual practitioners can demonstrate their commitment to the dominant masculine ideology and garner social respect and wealth by demonstrating their ritual aptitude and knowledge, especially in proclaming Indra's manly acts (*vīryà-*), preparing *sóma*, and maintaining the ritual Fire.[119] Since poet-priests define the identities and roles of all ritual participants in masculine and martial terms, they are also able to constrain the dispositions and status of those who wish to participate in *sóma* rituals. It seems that all Āryan men need to be defined in manly terms and need to present themselves as strong, tough, and masculine to interact

with such powerful martial gods like Indra, Agni, and Soma or to receive fame and their share of captured wealth, whether or not they actually fight in a battles or participate in cattle raids. We can once again see that Ṛgvedic ritual participants consistently construct an image of themselves that is heavily embedded in notions of conflict, reciprocity, and masculinity. An Āryan man must be tough in his everyday life and much more so when he is in the presence of the martial gods.

III: A Warrior's Reputation

The ritual process of faming Indra also demonstrates that human warriors receive fame, but only when they live up to their war god's example by being victorious in battle and true to form, only when they share wealth accumulated from martial excursions. Consider an early stanza to the war god:

> ṚV.6.47.16: *śṛṇvé vīrá ugrámugraṃ damāyánn anyámanyam atinenīyámānaḥ, edhamānadvíḷ ubháyasya rājā coṣkūyáte víśa índro manuṣyàn.*
>
> "He is famed as a brave man, subduing each and every powerful one, repeatedly leading one after another beyond [difficulties]. Hating fiery ones, chieftain of both [gods and men], Indra repeatedly stokes the clans, [especially] the human ones."

The poet fames Indra because he is a *vīrá*, yet this depends on the war god's ability to defeat enemies. The image of "stoking" (√*sku*) seems to refer to prodding or stirring a fire to make it burn brighter, and in this context it is a metaphor for increasing the clans' wealth.[120] It is clear then that Indra wins fame (*śrávas*) by being victorious in battle—one poet explicitly states this at ṚV.8.32.14b (*pṛ́tanāsu śravojítam*)—when he protects the tribes, and when he dispenses wealth to clansmen and those who sing his praises.

To gain their own fame, human warriors should also be successful in martial and economic endeavors. Abook 8 poet explicitly articulates the importance of this when he states that "good fortune" (*bhadrá*) belongs to the cow that gives milk and to the brave man (*vīrá*) who seeks fame (*śravasyánt-*).[121] This analogy appears to make the quest for prestige about as normal and natural as the production of milk for a cow, as well as making the warrior's actions a necessity for the sustenance of the community. Indra is of course the paragon and one poet closely intertwines the relationship between Indra and men as the war god's manly exploits will be glorified, but only because he ritually aids his martially inclined worshippers in their battles:

ṚV.1.131.5: *ā́d ít te asyá vīryàsya carkiran mádeṣu vṛ́ṣann uśíjo yád ā́vitha sakhīyató yád ā́vitha, cakártha kārám ebhyaḥ pṛ́tanāsu právantave, té anyā́manyāṃ nadyàṃ saniṣṇata śravasyántaḥ saniṣṇata.*

"And thus they repeatedly celebrated this manliness of yours at times of exhilarations, when, O bull, you helped the devotees, when you helped those seeking partnership. You performed the victory song for them to prevail in battles. They, one after the other, repeatedly win the river, seeking fame they repeatedly win."

What is interesting about this stanza is that like the examples presented above, in which men proclaim Indra's masculine deeds, this poet states that the devotees of the war god not only revere his *vīryà* but also seek their own fame by engaging in a battle over natural resources. What is more, in this case it is Indra who actively participates in the ritual so as to bolster his human counterparts in combat with a victory song; or to be more precise poets maintain that Indra's partnership, acts, and ritual song directly affect the success and fame of warriors.[122] In a similar vein to the ritual process involving poet-priests, martially inclined men demonstrate their masculinity by being victorious in battle and by ritually interacting with their war god, especially by proclaiming his martial deeds and by living up to them in real conflict. Ṛgvedic ritual performances thus involve a complex and reciprocal exchange of economic and symbolic capital in which ritualists sing the fame and manliness of the war god to substantiate their own social status and manly identities; to confirm that they are manly enough to participate in rituals; and, it seems, to align themselves with Indra so as to prepare themselves for battle, whether ritual or actual. Consequently, poets state that Indra and human warriors gain recognition for their martial activities only in ritual and that in the case of men, their success is dependent on their war god's endorsement. It seems then that when poets say that Indra has lived up to his martial expectations, they are in effect saying that real men should achieve (or have achieved) these things under the watchful eye of their war god or more correctly the discursive gaze of poet-priests.

Indra's acquisition of fame thus parallels the way in which warriors receive social recognition and prestige. However, this process is not as straightforward as it sounds since warriors also need other gods to confirm their standing. Consider a late poet who states that on account of his generosity, Indra can project his reputation and standing as a tough guy into heaven:

ṚV.10.28.12cd, to Indra: *nṛ́vād vádann úpa no māhi vā́jān diví śrávo dadhiṣe nā́ma vīráḥ.*

> "Speaking like a man, measure out prizes to us. In heaven you established [your] fame, [your] name as a brave man."

This poet encourages Indra to share the spoils of war (*vā́ja-*) in the ritual—and we note he should do this by "speaking like a man."[123] Furthermore, the war god sets his fame and standing as a warrior in the highest of realms: what better way to sanction his aggressive behavior? Interestingly, since the poet states that *vīrá* is a valued trait, a "name" (*nā́man*),[124] then it seems that it needs to be constantly reaffirmed or else it could be lost (we recall at ṚV.7.18.16ab that a man is not a full *vīrá* if he fails to worship Indra). Another poet highlights the continual process of gaining desirable qualities since the deities Heaven and Earth also strengthen Indra's masculinity (*paúṃsya*) and fame (*śrávas*).[125]

It is telling then that men establish their fame and martial standing in the same way as Indra. For example, like his war god, a human chieftain stretches his "unaging fame" (*śrávaḥ- ajáram*) toward heaven.[126] In addition, a late poet states that human warriors have their fame confirmed in a similar manner:

> ṚV.10.93.10: *aíṣu dyāvāpṛthivī dhātam mahád asmé vīréṣu viśvácarṣaṇi śrávaḥ, pṛkṣáṃ vā́jasya sātáye pṛkṣáṃ rāyótá turváṇe.*
>
> "On these ones here, O Heaven and Earth, on the brave men among us establish great fame common to all boundary peoples, nourishment for winning of the prize, and nourishment to be triumphant in wealth."[127]

Just as it is true for Indra, this late poet places his warriors' reputation and martial activity under the auspices of the two cosmic deities, Heaven and Earth. A man's identity is thus intimately connected with the cosmos,[128] and it is perhaps for this reason that the goddess Dawn, the daughter of heaven, sometimes bestows fame on men. We can see then that Indra's situation once again corresponds to the lives of men, who, like their war god, are famed only when they are victorious in wealth-generating exploits. If we push this interpretation to its logical conclusion—if we accept that Indra is a discursive formation produced by ritualists—then the subtext implies that Indra is famed when human warriors are successful in their martial exploits. What is more, poet-priests strategically make their demands for victory and wealth seem more than ritually arbitrary by asserting that Indra and warriors need one another for success, and to gain recognition, both parties need to keep in good stead with the forces of the cosmos. The war god's reputation thus lies in the hands of men who act like him and who allow ritual practitioners to ascribe their victories to him. And why do they allow this? Without Indra's help, partnership,

and presence in battle—that is, without the performance of early Vedic rituals—men cannot be victorious and cannot receive their own fame for their courageous deeds. Though poet-priests may wield ritual and symbolic power over divine or human warriors, this power depends on the bravery of martially inclined individuals. In other words, a warrior's success in battle both attests Indra's triumphant presence and provides poet-priests with the legitimacy to perform rituals.

These examples thus highlight an economy of ritualized practices involving the exchange of material and symbolic capital between poet-priests, warriors, and their gods in Ṛgvedic *sóma* rituals. Fame is an essential commodity for all Āryan men, whether poets, priests, or warriors, yet its acquisition is embedded within a complex set of masculine ideals, expectations, and relationships. Furthermore, while the real-world triumphs of human warriors and chieftains may serve as the model for Indra, poet-priests make sure that human victories are naught without the gods or the ritual practitioners to secure the gods' help. Poet-priests thus ensure that their ritual performances are indispensable to the successes of divine and human combatants. They do this by aligning the identities of men with their war god Indra, among others deities; by stating that human warriors will be victorious only when ritual practitioners have successfully partnered them with Indra; and by continually insisting on the necessity of ritual performances for all Āryan men, especially if they wish to receive fame.[129] It is nevertheless in the best interest of poet-priests to perform rituals and sing of Indra's cosmic and terrestrial conquests—to propagate a violent ideology—because the reproduction of this ideology benefits them and ultimately defines the structure of their clan or tribe. To be precise, Ṛgvedic poets assert that Indra's masculine bravery and generosity are real to garner their own prestige via their connection with and ritual mastery over the war god. In addition, they valorize Indra's manly exploits to encourage human men to be violent, masculine, and charitable—qualities that serve the poet's self-interest. In lionizing the conquests and exploits of human warriors within *sóma* rituals, poets expect to receive payment for their encomium, and they could presumably withhold such recognition for any failures. In turn, warriors perhaps pay poet-priests to sing of Indra's manly deeds because this aligns their identities with their war god and legitimizes their martial exploits by projecting them into the divine realm. Hence, this constitutes a significant way to display their own masculinity and legitimize their daring activity.

In bringing this section to a close, I would like to speculate further on some of the social processes that may underlie the role of fame in fostering a tough, even aggressive form of masculinity.[130] A system of respect and status would contribute to clan cohesion because it situates individuals within a group

and within the dominant masculine ideology. The struggle for reputation and status then goes a long way to explaining why Āryan men participate in a violent androcentric ritual tradition as they derive a sense of power, as well as financial gain, from fulfilling their duties as men. At the ritual level, Ṛgvedic poet-priests repeatedly assert that ritual performances are the appropriate arena in which to affirm a tough manly identity and *sóma* rituals appear to function as the dominant arena in which the clans broadcast their conquests during yearly migrations. In light of this, poets secure patronage by displaying their own ritual expertise, toughness, and manhood in praising Indra, in mediating the ritual Fire, and in preparing *sóma*, among other things. What is more, poets perhaps define their clan or tribe's reputation as the toughest by constantly assessing Indra's martial skills and victories. A tribe with a reputation as exceptionally dangerous may not have encountered as much trouble with rival groups, and this may have reduced the number of times it had to fight. The point here is that it may have simply been enough for a man to demonstrate his masculinity by performing rituals, by singing to such gods as Indra, Agni, and Soma, and by aiding them in ritualized cosmic battle. To put it another way, Ṛgvedic poet-priests constantly create an image of themselves and their world that is intrinsically based on reciprocity in the face of conflict and that emphasizes masculine traits and victorious practices in both ritual and combat. It is a rhetoric of personal and communal power and a ritualized discourse of domination. The point here is that we should not think that all men who sought to define themselves as *vīrá-* actually engaged in combat or dangerous acts. At the ideological level, it would have been good enough to just be thought of as a tough strong man, and this could be constantly affirmed in ritual performances. Nevertheless, there is an ever-present subtext in Ṛgvedic discourse that demands real acts of violence from some men, especially those defined as *vīrá-* and those who want to act like their gods. This means that a tribe's ability to build and maintain a reputation comes not only from its ability to summon Indra ritually, but also from being victorious in actual cattle raids or open warfare. Furthermore, ritualists elevate social relationships to the point that they become cosmologically embodied ideals, such that to fail to pursue Indra's expectations is not only a social or ideological failure, but also a vitiation of the war god himself.

Since warriors gain reputation from martial endeavors, they were perhaps continually assessed in terms of their ability to fight, the quality of their courage, and their commitment to protect the tribe and increase its wealth. The relentless quest to establish fame would also strengthen the clan's confidence in its warriors' capacity to protect and defend tribal interests. A warrior's reputation may have brought personal recognition and prestige, but competitive

and dangerous environments produce a constant state of flux and unstable relationships. As a result, the demand for repetitive acts of violence suggests that men had to maintain or enhance their status in the group as a perpetual reality over time, while continuously defining and redefining themselves in tough masculine terms. What is more, while a man's standing as a warrior can function as a means of self-protection from threats both internal and external to the tribe, injury and death would have been an ever-present reality. Men are expected to engage in combat to procure riches, and the subtext implies that they should die trying. As Padin (1996: 10–12) states, honor may not only revolve around issues of fame, but also issues of integrity and a refusal of individuals to violate allegiances. Honor can demand a willingness to suffer or even die to maintain group commitments and to protect personal or group identity from insults or affronts. With this said, if the world of gods mirrors and reproduces the world of men, then this is a somewhat asymmetrical relationship since Indra is immortal and never fails in his martial exploits, yet this would not be the case for men. Declarations of Indra's responsibilities and achievements communicate to human warriors that their martial activities will win them renown, but such activities potentially come with the highest price.

Conclusion

The terms *vīrá* and *vīryà* therefore signify core ideals of an androcentric martial tradition and a violent ritualized economy. Their use attests a masculine code of honor and ultimately a Ṛgvedic cult of the warrior. Poets reproduce a hegemonic form of masculinity that defines a man as a philanthropic warrior, while objectifying males of all ages as highly valued commodities whose identity and self-worth is defined by ritual participation, by allegiance to lords and fathers, and by success in cattle raids and warfare. The role of a warrior is further embedded in a ritualized patriarchal economy involving the exchange of material and symbolic capital, including males themselves. Ritual practitioners encourage the martial activity of warriors as a key factor in the economic survival and dominance of the tribe. In fact, the evidence presented in this chapter has illuminated various ways in which the clans and tribes actually constitute themselves and define the quality of their members and the relationships they should have with one another. This further suggests that the ritual community maintained systems of opportunity for its males, whether young or old, and provided them with the controls and legitimate means for survival, economic gain, and social mobility. Indra consistently personifies this dominant ideology, and men are expected to act like their war god because this sustains a ritual

economy for individual and communal ends. Violence functions to construct meaningful social relationships and organization while establishing boundaries, territorial ownership, social status, and ultimately the criteria for inclusion in and exclusion from the tribe. The tribes perhaps thrived because they reproduced a dominant ritualized way in which men could structure their lives through an economy of material and symbolic practices. Ṛgvedic poets thus propagate a violent androcentric martial ideology—a Ṛgvedic Kriegethik—centered on male dominance and power, which normalizes conflict as a, if not the, principal means of economic security and social prestige. As a matter of fact, Ṛgvedic poet-priests give men no real alternatives to this lifestyle. They ritualize aggression as an inevitable part of Āryan life, and according to that ideology warriors must serve their community as directed by their masters and ritual practitioners. To paraphrase Jankowski (1991: 139), for Āryan men violence is the currency of life and becomes the currency of the economy of the tribe. It is easy to see that much of the social tension and conflict in early Vedic society comes not only from the realities of surviving in the ancient world, but also from the very gods in which so much value and gravitas is invested and from the very practice of participating in early Vedic rituals. Āryan masculinity and violence is both a necessity and a significant cultural construct in which, the evidence suggests, males are socialized from birth and expected to participate throughout their lives.

3

Mighty Champions and Slaying the Dragon

As we have seen, Ṛgvedic poets construct different forms of masculinity and various masculine identities, roles, and relationships, yet embed these in a dominant androcentric ideology. This chapter will examine the role of a *śū́ra*, particularly the representation of his powerful, big body. Without an examination of the term *śū́ra*, we cannot fully understand the various ways of being a man in ancient India. The term *śū́ra* derives from √*śū* ("to swell, enlarge; become massive, strong"), and at the most literal level it means "big/strong man."[1] This chapter will argue that the term *śū́ra* is far more specialized in use than has been previously recognized and signifies a specific and expert martial role. This is evident in the fact that Indra confronts his archnemesis, the cosmic serpent Vṛtra, only in his role as a *śū́ra*. The term *śū́ra* designates the real hero of early Vedic ritual culture, and to signal this I have translated it as "champion."[2] Furthermore, just as a *vīrá* is closely associated with the embodied masculine quality of *vīryà*, the term *śū́ra* frequently appears with the abstract noun *śávas* ("might, strength, power"), which also derives from the same root √*śū*.[3] This is not merely for poetic alliteration, as the use of the term *śávas* sheds light on the role of the *śū́ra*, on the way his body was supposed to be used, and on Indra's battle with Vṛtra. As we will see, his is a mythic body constructed in violence. This chapter will thus explore the relationship between the role of a *śū́ra*, the symbolism of physical strength, and the myth of Indra's destruction of the Vedic "dragon," Vṛtra.

Would the Real Hero Stand Up: Defining the Role of a *Śū́ra*

To begin, let us consider the way in which Ṛgvedic poets define the role of a *śū́ra*. A poet from the oldest layer of the text provides the best evidence for a specialized martial role, as a *śū́ra* is clearly a preeminent human warrior, yet he is no match for his divine counterpart, Indra:

> ṚV.6.25.4–5: *śū́ro vā śū́raṃ vanate śárīrais tanūrúcā táruṣi yát kṛṇvaíte, toké vā góṣu tánaye yád apsú ví krándasī urvárāsu brávaite. nahí tvā śū́ro ná turó ná dhṛ́ṣṇúr ná tvā yodhó mányamāno yuyódha, índra nákiṣ ṭvā práty asty eṣāṃ víśvā jātā́ny abhy àsi tā́ni.*
>
> "To be sure, a champion will vanquish a champion with [their] bodies, when, the two, with torsos gleaming, will take action against each other in [their] struggle. Or when offspring, cattle, descendents, or waters [are contested, their] two cries will sound out across the fertile fields. However, no champion, no surpasser, no bold one, no one considering himself a fighter has fought you. O Indra, none of them is equal to you. You are superior to all who are born."

The contest between the two human *śū́ra-* appears to be one on one, which suggests that a *śū́ra* is a champion of his tribe. By employing the same ritualized strategy we saw in previous chapters, the poet states that the martial activities of human *śū́ra-* pale in comparison to those of their war god. The poet perhaps reminds his tribe's *śū́ra* that while his valor and martial prowess are greatly respected, his ego should not get too big because Indra will put him in his place. This early poet thus communicates the martial and ethical values of human *śū́ra-*, yet, like *vīrá-*, he ensures that such individuals are subject to Indra's rule and example. He continues to reinforce this ritualized ideal in the next stanza of his hymn:

> ṚV.6.25.6: *sá patyata ubháyor nṛ́mṇám ayór yádī vedhásaḥ samithé hávante, vṛ́tré vā mahó nṛ́váti kṣáye vā vyácasvantā yádi vitantasaíte.*
>
> "He [Indra] is lord of the manhood [*nṛ́mṇá*] of both these [*śū́ra-*] when ritual experts invoke [him or them] in the contest, or when these two who control an expanse repeatedly struggle against each other in [battle against] Vṛtra [or an obstacle], or in [competition for] a dwelling place greatly brimming with men."

The two individuals are of course the warring *śū́ra-*, who we note control territory (*vyácasvant-*). The poet emphasizes Indra's standing over human warriors

as the god governs (√*pat*) the manhood (*nṛmṇá*) of the two *śū́ra*-, especially when they battle Vṛ́tra, the paradigmatic hindrance to Āryan concerns, or against each other for land and men. We also note that Vṛ́tra is not only Indra's enemy in the cosmic realm but can also represent a foe for human *śū́ra*- in their lived world.[4] For this poet, men defined as *śū́ra*- compete for political and territorial dominance and the loyalty of men, yet they are subject to their war god's authoritative example. This early poet also seems to imply that such men should excel in courage and recklessness in the vanguard of battle. In this vein, another early poet succinctly captures such values in a line to the Maruts:

> ṚV.5.59.5b: *śū́rā iva prayúdhaḥ prótá yuyudhuḥ.*
>
> "Like champions in the front of battle, they fought out in front."[5]

These two early poets thus depict the role of a *śū́ra* in terms that are more individualistic than those applied to a *vīrá*. As we will see, this is also true for poets across all layers of the text.

A book 9 poet highlights the specialized role of a *śū́ra* in the opening stanza of his hymn to the god Soma:

> ṚV.9.96.1: *prá senānīḥ śū́ro ágre ráthānāṃ gavyánn eti hárṣate asya sénā, bhadrā́n kṛṇvánn indrahavā́n sákhibhya ā́ sómo vástrā rabhasā́ni datte.*
>
> "The army leader, the champion, at the front of the chariots, he goes forth seeking cattle. His army bursts with excitement. Making invocations to Indra auspicious for [his] partners, Soma puts on wild garments."

Oberlies (1999: 204) states that the image of Soma leading his army into battle corresponds to the ritual preparation of *sóma*, specifically the running of its juices into the straining cloth. Even so, the extended metaphor highlights the position of a *śū́ra* as an "army leader" (*senānī́*) at the head of other charioteers in cattle raids.[6] It is noteworthy that elsewhere a poet calls Indra a *śū́ra* and a *sátvan* ("true man"),[7] while another poet calls the war god a *sátvan* and a cattle-raiding "army leader" (*senānī́*).[8]

Other poets underscore the relationship between the terms *śū́ra* and *sátvan*, while indicating that a *śū́ra* can have warriors at his disposal. For example, as a *śū́ra*, Indra goes into battle with "true men" (*sátvan*-).[9] A family book poet states that Indra fights alongside his tribe's *sátvan*-, who are themselves called *śū́ra*-:

> ṚV.2.30.10: *asmā́kebhiḥ sátvabhiḥ śū́ra śū́rair vīryà kṛdhi yā́ni te kártvāni, jyóg abhūvann ánudhūpitāso hatví téṣām ā́ bharā no vásūni.*

> "O champion, with our true men, with our champions, perform manly acts which are yours to perform. For a long time they have been puffed up; after smashing them, bring their treasures here to us."

While the evidence is anecdotal, there seems to be a close connection between a warrior's standing as a "true man" (*sátvan*) and a *śū́ra*. In addition, we note that the term *vīryà* refers to the martial activity of not only a *vīrá*, but also other aggressive male roles as both the divine and human champions are commanded to perform manly acts and distribute the spoils of war. The poet also expects that human *śū́ra-* will enter battle under Indra's command and with the war god as their ideal model. Several other poets also state that in his role as a *śū́ra*, Indra commands men:

> ṚV.1.178.3a: *jétā nṛ́bhir índraḥ pṛtsú śū́raḥ*.
>
> "Indra, a champion in battles, is the one who conquers with men."
>
> ṚV.8.92.28ab: *evā́ hy ási vīrayúr evā́ śū́ra utá sthiráḥ*.
> "For indeed you are the seeker of brave men, as such you are a sturdy champion."

In the first example, Indra fights as a *śū́ra* with men at his side. In the second example, Indra strives to command brave warriors (*vīrayú* < *vīrá*), and this prefigures his standing as a resolute *śū́ra*.[10] Elsewhere, as a *śū́ra*, Indra confronts Vṛtra with men (*nár-*),[11] and the horse Dadhikrā is compared to a *śū́ra* who is called a "lord of men" (*nṛpáti*).[12] While Indra by his very nature has a fighting force at his disposal, these examples suggest that his standing as a *śū́ra* enables him to command other men in cattle raids and battle.

The specialized martial position of a *śū́ra* is also suggested by his association with chariots, and in the following example Indra is once again called a *sátvan*:

> ṚV.1.173.5ab: *tám u ṣṭuhíndraṃ yó ha sátvā yáḥ śū́ro maghávā yó ratheṣṭhā́ḥ*.
>
> "Praise this Indra, who is indeed a true man, who is a champion, who is the munificent one mounted on his chariot."

Consider another poet who also highlights a *śū́ra*'s standing as a charioteer (*rathirá*):

> ṚV.9.76.2ab: *śū́ro ná dhatta ā́yudhā gábhastyoḥ svàḥ síṣāsan rathiró gáviṣṭiṣu*.

> "As if a champion, he [Soma] takes weapons in his hands, a charioteer striving to win the sun in the cattle raids."

As in the opening stanza of the hymn to Soma cited above (ṚV.9.96.1), Soma carries out a cattle raid as a chariot-driving *śū́ra*. The relationship between a *śū́ra* and chariots is attested in a half dozen other instances.[13] In Vedic culture, chariots are potent martial and political symbols, and the individual who rides on them frequently holds an influential, if not royal, status.[14] This implies then that a *śū́ra* holds a high martial, and perhaps political, position because he is eligible to ride on a chariot. In contrast, there are only two examples in which gods are explicitly called *vīrá-* when associated with chariots (namely Indra and the Aśvins).[15] Indra is, of course, a *vīrá* and a *śū́ra* at all times.[16] The point here is that Ṛgvedic poets infrequently connect the role of a *vīrá* with chariots, while a *śū́ra* commands men, leads the army, and rides at the head of other charioteers in battle.

There are several other indications that a *śū́ra* holds a political position or at least that a chieftain could be a *śū́ra*. For example, as a *śū́ra*, Indra's "dominion" (*kṣatrá*) and "supremacy" (or "supreme dominion"; *abhíbhūti*) are said to thrive like heaven.[17] In a line to Indra, a *śū́ra* is once said to rule (*rā́ṣṭi śū́raḥ*).[18] One poet even intertwines martial, political, and cosmological metaphors as the divine *śū́ra* girds his armor on for battle and sets heaven on his head as a celestial crown:

> ṚV.2.17.2, to Indra: *sá bhūtu yó ha prathamā́ya dhā́yasa ójo mímāno mahimā́nam ā́tirat, śū́ro yó yutsú tanvàm parivyáta śīrṣáṇi dyā́m mahinā́ práty amuñcata.*
>
> "Let him indeed be one who is present for the foremost taking of nurture. Showing the measure of [his] power, he crossed over to greatness. The champion, who has armored his body in battles, fastened heaven on his head due to [his] greatness."

While these examples do not mean that all *śū́ra-* are rulers, they do ascribe to this figure a political role.[19]

The martial and political position of a *śū́ra* is further suggested in a stanza from the oldest layer of the *Ṛgveda* in which Indra acquires the title "lord" (*páti*) after he slays Vṛtra:

> ṚV.4.16.7: *apó vṛtráṃ vavrivā́ṃsam párāhan prā́vat te vájram pṛthiví sácetāḥ, prā́rṇāṃsi samudríyāṇy ainoḥ pátir bhávañ chávasā śūra dhṛṣṇo.*

> "At distance you smashed Vṛtra, who had enclosed the waters. With like mind, Earth assisted your mace. You drove forth the seaward floods, becoming lord due to [your] might [*śávas*], O daring champion."[20]

This early poet implies that political status comes from a show of physical strength. Indra is a daring *śū́ra* who becomes a lord because he successfully exercises his might in battle against Vṛtra to free the cosmic waters. As we will continue to see, the terms *śū́ra* and *śávas* are closely associated at conceptual, physical, and poetic levels (this is especially seen in the myth of Vṛtra's destruction). To briefly highlight this, consider a family book poet who portrays the close relationship between *śū́ra* and *śávas*:

> ṚV.7.27.1: *índraṃ náro nemádhitā havante yát pā́ryā yunájate dhíyas tā́ḥ, śū́ro nṛ́ṣātā śávasaś cakāná ā́ gómati vrajé bhajā tváṃ naḥ.*
>
> "Men invoke Indra when facing each other [before battle], since he will yoke these decisive insights. The champion [*śū́ra*] is taking pleasure in [his] might [*śávas*] at winning over men: Allot shares to us here in the pen containing cattle."

In this stanza, Indra is reminded of his responsibility to distribute the spoils of war, yet he also celebrates his own physical power (*śávas*) as a *śū́ra* in defeating rival men.[21] In contrast, a late poet instructs the divine *śū́ra* to "give to men the might (*śávas*) of men."[22] Given the previous example, it may be the case that this poet wants Indra to bestow on his men the power that conquers other men. The point here is that these examples highlight the close relationship between the terms *śū́ra* and *śávas* (we will consider this issue in more depth shortly). There is also a strong connection between the terms *śávas* and *páti* as Indra frequently takes the title "lord of might" (*śávasas pátim*).[23] For example:

> ṚV.3.41.5: *matáyaḥ somapā́m urúṃ rihánti śávasas pátim, índraṃ vatsáṃ ná mātáraḥ.*
>
> "Thoughts lick Indra, the broad *sóma*-drinking lord of might, like mothers [lick] a calf."
>
> ṚV.6.44.4: *tyám u vo áprahaṇaṃ gṛṇīṣé śávasas pátim, índraṃ viśvāsā́haṃ náram máṃhiṣṭhaṃ viśvácarṣaṇim.*
>
> "And, for you all, I sing to the lord of might, who does not knock us out, to Indra, dominating all, the man, most munificent who controls all boundary peoples."

ṚV.8.68.4: *viśvānarasya vas pátim ánānatasya śávasaḥ, évaiś ca carṣaṇīnắm ūtí huve ráthānām.*

"For you all, I invoke the lord of unbending might that governs all men, along with [his] help for the boundary peoples [that call him] in their various ways and for their chariots."[24]

These poets emphasize Indra's standing as a strong manly lord who drinks *sóma* and rules over people.[25] We also note in the final example that the poet-priest qualifies *śávas* as "unbending" and "governing all men." We recall at ṚV.4.16.7 (cited above) that as a *śū́ra*, Indra becomes a lord because of his might. While no poet ever explicitly calls a *śū́ra* a "lord of might," ṚV.4.16.7 and the close associations of *śū́ra* and *śávas* suggest, albeit speculatively, that the title *śávasas pátim* would have applied to a *śū́ra*.

To sum up, Ṛgvedic poets consistently state that divine and human *śū́ra*-can lead armies, command men, ride at the head of chariots, become lords, and fight against each other *mano-a-mano*, so to speak. Hence, the evidence presented in this section strongly suggests that the term *śū́ra* signifies a specialized and heroic martial role that entails a high political standing. The *śū́ra* is a tribal champion. Let us now turn to the best evidence for the specialized martial role of a *śū́ra*, namely, the killing of Vṛtra.

Killing the Dragon

In his magnum opus *How to Kill a Dragon* (1995), Calvert Watkins painstakingly lays out the complex and inherited structures of Indo-European poetry as typified in the formula "hero slays serpent." In the *Ṛgveda*, this formula appears in Indra's destruction of Vṛtra. This feat defines the war god's raison d'être and is part of a central organizational myth that incorporates ritual, ethical, and political ideals. In the cosmic realm, Vṛtra is a gargantuan snake, perhaps a cobra, who coils around a cosmic mountain that encloses all the waters. The term *vṛtrá* literally means "obstacle" (< √*vṛ* "to block, obstruct, cover, enclose, encircle"), and the image is of a snake ensnaring and constricting its prey. Upon killing Vṛtra, Indra breaks open the mountain, allowing the waters to flow free and life to exist.[26] In a related episode, and one that frequently overlaps with the former, the war god also rescues sunlight and cattle from a cave (*valá* < √*vṛ*).[27] A late poet even makes this act of theomachy a central component of Indra's manly identity:

ṚV.1.80.3: *préhy abhíhi dhṛṣṇuhí ná te vájro ní yaṃsate, índra nṛmṇáṃ hí te śávo háno vṛtráṃ jáyā apó 'rcann ánu svarā́jyam.*

> "Charge, attack, be bold! Your mace will not be restrained, O Indra, for manhood and might belong to you. You will smash Vṛtra and conquer the waters. They exalt [your] sovereignty."[28]

> ṚV.1.80.10: *índro vṛtrásya táviṣīṃ nír ahan sáhasā sáhaḥ, mahát tád asya paúṃsyaṃ vṛtráṃ jaghanvā́ṁ asṛjad árcann ánu svarā́jyam.*

> "Indra has smashed away Vṛtra's vigor, [Vṛtra's] dominating strength through [his own] dominating strength. Great is this masculine act of his; in smashing Vṛtra, he released [the waters]. They exalt [his] sovereignty."[29]

Vṛtra is Indra's archnemesis and, as we will see, the serpent represents the paradigmatic obstacle and hindrance to early Vedic ritual and political concerns. Vṛtra is both a mythological and immediate enemy who entangles, encoils, blocks, and crushes all things prosperous and desirable for the migratory Āryan tribes.

While not central to his argument, Watkins (1995: 330) points out that Indra is able to destroy Vṛtra on account of "strength" (*śávas*) or his weapon of choice, the mace. He also notes that the term for "hero" in this context is *śū́ra*. Let me state here that Indra confronts the cosmic serpent only in his role as a *śū́ra*, and in many cases he defeats Vṛtra only because of his immense physical might (*śávas*).[30] Although Indra is a *vīrá* and a *śū́ra* at all times, no Ṛgvedic poet uses the term *vīrá* to indicate the individual who fights and defeats Vṛtra. This fact alone highlights the clear difference between the two masculine roles (more on this below). In light of this, the following evidence will show that the primary function of the *śū́ra* is to battle the cosmic serpent Vṛtra. The all-important responsibility to slay Vṛtra is the best indication of the specialized martial and political role of the *śū́ra*.

The myth of Vṛtra's destruction appears consistently throughout the *Ṛgveda*. Consider a stanza from the oldest layer of the text:

> ṚV.4.22.5: *tā́ tú ta indra maható mahā́ni víśveṣv ít sávaneṣu pravā́cyā, yác chūra dhṛṣṇo dhṛṣatā́ dadhṛṣvā́n áhiṃ vájreṇa śávasāviveṣīḥ.*

> "O Indra, these are the great deeds of the great one, which are surely to be proclaimed at all pressings, since, O daring champion, you, having dared with daring, toiled against the serpent with [your] mace due to [your] might."

Another family book poet from the middle layer states that Indra's destruction of the cosmic serpent parallels his conquest of non-Āryan peoples:

ṚV.2.11.18: *dhiṣvā́ śávaḥ śūra yéna vṛtrám avā́bhinad dā́num aurṇavābhám, ápāvṛṇor jyótir ā́ryāya ní savyatáḥ sādi dásyur indra.*

"O champion, establish for yourself might, through which you cut down Vṛtra, the son of Danu, the Spider's son. You uncovered the light for the Āryan, the barbarian has been set down to the left, O Indra."[31]

Kuiper (1960: 269) has already noted that "the Aryans conceived their battles against the Dasyus as a reiteration, a replica of Indra's mythic fight." Finally, a nonfamily book poet states that Indra's victory affords him the title "Vṛtra smasher" (*vṛtrahán*):

ṚV.8.24.2: *śávasā hy ási śrutó vṛtrahátyena vṛtrahā́, maghaír maghóno áti śūra dāśasi.*

"Indeed, due to [your] might you are renowned, due to the smashing of Vṛtra you are the Vṛtra smasher. O champion, through munificent acts you fulfill ritual obligations beyond munificent ones."

In these examples, Indra confronts Vṛtra as a *śū́ra*. He is the paradigmatic champion confronting the archetypical enemy Other. Furthermore, each poet employs the term *śávas* to indicate that Indra overcomes the serpent through his physical power. In the case of Vṛtra's defeat, Indra's mace (*vájra*) is of course the actual instrument of death. As Watkins (1995: 331) points out, the instrumental *śávasā* appears with √*han* ("to smash, strike") and √*vadh* ("to slay, kill") in the same formulaic slot where *vájreṇa* occurs. In saying this, the *vájra* shares not only a poetic relationship with *śávas*, but also a functional one as a late poet states that as a *śū́ra*, Indra forges the mace with his *śávas*:

ṚV.10.105.6: *prā́staud ṛṣvaújā ṛṣvébhis tatákṣa śū́raḥ śávasā, ṛbhúr ná krátubhir mātaríśvā.*

"The one of towering power [Indra] sang the fore-praise along with the towering ones [Maruts]. The champion has fashioned [the mace] through [his] might, like the craftsman Mātariśvan through manifold resolve."[32]

According to several other late poets, in fashioning the mace with strength, Indra's signature weapon instills power in the wielder:

ṚV.1.52.7: *hradáṃ ná hí tvā nyṛśánty ūrmáyo bráhmāṇīndra táva yā́ni várdhanā, tváṣṭā cit te yújyaṃ vāvṛdhe śávas tatákṣa vájram abhíbhūtyojasam.*

> "For the waves rush down to you, as to the ocean, O Indra, as the sacred formulations, your means of increase. Even Tvaṣṭṛ strengthened [his] might connected with you, [when] he fashioned the mace that has supreme power."
>
> ṚV.1.130.4: *dādṛhāṇó vájram índro gábhastyoḥ kṣádmeva tigmám ásanāya sáṃ śyad ahihátyāya sáṃ śyat, saṃvivyāná ójasā śávobhir indra majmánā, táṣṭeva vṛkṣáṃ vaníno ní vṛścasi paraśvéva ní vṛścasi.*
>
> "Firmly holding his mace in both hands, Indra honed it sharp like a knife, for throwing, he honed it to smash the serpent. O Indra, investing yourself with power, with manifold might, with greatness, you cut down the trees, like a carpenter [cuts] wood, you cut [Vṛtra] down as if with an axe."

In the first stanza, the divine blacksmith Tvaṣṭṛ appears to strengthen himself when he forges the powerful mace for Indra. In the second stanza, Indra empowers himself when he sharpens his signature weapon so as to slay Vṛtra. Another late poet succinctly clarifies the close relationship between the *vájra* and *śávas* when he gives voice to Indra:

> ṚV.10.49.2d: *aháṃ vájraṃ śávase dhṛṣṇv ā́ dade.*
>
> "'I took for myself the bold mace for might.'"[33]

For these poets, it takes strength to forge and wield the mace effectively, and the weapon becomes a symbol and conduit of Indra's physical power and destructive capability. These examples thus highlight the fact that Indra's standing as a *śū́ra* is closely associated with the quality of his strength, the efficacy of his mace, and his battle with Vṛtra. A champion is defined by his physical power, which is of course a necessity for forging a weapon of war and overpowering Vṛtra in battle. This brings us to a fork in this chapter, as there are now two issues we need to consider. First, we need to define conclusively the role of the *śū́ra* in light of the above evidence. Second, we need to examine in more depth the symbolic role that *śávas* plays in Vṛtra's destruction. Its use sheds light on one of the underlying themes in this mythic narrative and the way in which poets construct and assign a specific function to a champion's body, whether Indra or human.

Vṛtra, *Vīryà*, and the Absent *Vīrá*

The role of a *śū́ra* can be defined by comparing it with that of a *vīrá*. The difference between the role of a *śū́ra* and that of a *vīrá* is striking. As we saw in

chapter 2, lords, fathers, or patrons seek to possess *vīrá-*, and these idealized males are symbols of wealth or are expected to distribute wealth accumulated from warfare. It is noteworthy that a *śū́ra* is never called a *suvíra*, that is, one "in control of good men." A *śū́ra* certainly commands men (*nár*, *vīrá*, *sátvan*), yet the term *suvíra* predominantly denotes a patron. And although a *śū́ra* should distribute wealth, no poet ever alludes to the control of a champion by anyone other than Indra. It is also significant that although a poet may use the terms *nár* and *vīrá* in ritual contexts, he never calls himself a *śū́ra* when describing his ritual activity in masculine terms. This suggests that the term *śū́ra* is reserved strictly for an actual martial role rather than a ritualized one. Even more telling is the fact that although Indra is a *vīrá* at all times, in no stanza does a Ṛgvedic poet use the term *vīrá* to designate the individual who fights and defeats Vṛtra.[34] This mythological act has significant cosmological and political implications, as it is Indra's defining responsibility and signature exploit. In addition, a *vīrá* is only once associated with *śávas*, yet only in the context of being called a "settlement lord" (*sátpati*),[35] and elsewhere it is the *sátpati* who confronts Vṛtra with his *śávas*.[36] This indicates that the role of a *vīrá* does not relate to the prominent responsibility of slaying Vṛtra. Moreover, a *vīrá* is almost never associated with chariots.[37] To my mind, the clear difference in the use and meaning of the terms *vīrá* and *śū́ra* calls into question the standard translation of *vīrá* as "hero." The fact that Indra never explicitly defeats Vṛtra as a *vīrá* means that this all-important exploit is not a component of what defines a brave man's role and duties. If any notion of heroism exists in early Vedic culture, where a highly valued extraordinary act of bravery and honor is at stake, I would expect this to be defined by combat with Vṛtra. Since this masculine act par excellence is carried out by the powerful *śū́ra*, then the *śū́ra* is the real hero of early Vedic ritual culture.[38]

It is necessary to consider the limited appearances of the term *vīryà* in relation to Vṛtra's defeat. Out of its 87 Ṛgvedic attestations, poets employ *vīryà* in only four cases in this context; twice in family book stanzas from the middle layer, and twice from the final layer in book 1 (we note that no poet from the oldest layer associates *vīryà* with Vṛtra's defeat).[39] Consider the two family book examples:

> ṚV.2.11.5: *gúhā hitáṃ gúhyaṃ gūḷhám apsv ápīvṛtam māyínaṃ kṣiyántam, utó apó dyā́ṃ tastabhvā́ṃsam áhann áhiṃ śūra vīryèṇa.*
>
> "The one established in secret, the secret one secreted among the waters, the crafty one dwelling under cover and having blocked the waters and heaven; O champion, that serpent you smashed due to [your] manly power [*vīryà*]."

> ṚV.3.33.7: *pravā́cyaṃ śaśvadhā́ vīryàṃ tád índrasya kárma yád áhiṃ vivṛ́ścát, ví vájreṇa pariṣádo jaghānā́yann ā́pó 'yanam ichámānāḥ.*
>
> "This manly act [*vīryà*] is to be proclaimed over and over again, the act of Indra, when he hewed apart the serpent. He smashed apart the barriers [coils?] with [his] mace, [and] the waters [came forth] seeking [their] course."

These stanzas illustrate Vṛtra's constriction of the universe, especially the cosmic waters and their subsequent release upon his death. In the first stanza, Indra is called a *śū́ra*, and in both cases the war god exercises his *vīryà* or acts according to its prescriptions. We recall that elsewhere, in his role as a *śū́ra*, Indra displays his *vīryà* in battle,[40] and a chieftain (*rā́jan*) is once associated with *vīryà*.[41] This indicates that poets employ the term *vīryà* to signify masculine qualities, exploits, and responsibilites that are expected of various martial and political roles (*vīrá*, *śū́ra*, *rā́jan*).

The term *vīryà* also appears in the most famous, clearest account of Indra's battle in the great "Vṛtra hymn", ṚV.1.32.1–15, which is introduced this way:

> ṚV.1.32.1: *índrasya nú vīryā̀ṇi prá vocaṃ yā́ni cakā́ra prathamā́ni vajrí, áhann áhim ánv apás tatarda prá vakṣáṇā abhinat párvatānām.*
>
> "I will now proclaim Indra's manly acts [*vīryà-*], those foremost ones that the mace wielder has performed. He smashed the serpent. He bored out the waters. He split the sides of the mountains."[42]

In this stanza, *vīryà* appears in the plural and perhaps corresponds to the three martial activities relating to the serpent, waters, and mountains; all of which feature as part of the collective Vṛtra narrative. We have already seen that the term *vīryà* refers to various martial exploits and obligations, such as conquering the universe, dominating the tribes, and engaging in cattle raids and open warfare with Āryans and foreign peoples. If *vīryà* signifies and encompasses the virile reckless masculinity of Indra and human warriors, and also their martial duties and exploits, then Vṛtra's defeat constitutes but one expression of these. To be precise, in the case where Indra engages Vṛtra on account of his *vīryà*, the war god proves his manliness by embodying and enacting a broad androcentric martial ideal and code of honor.[43] Nevertheless, the heroic act of confronting the Vedic dragon is reserved for Indra in his role as a *śū́ra*, rather than that of a *vīrá*. There is some tension here in relation to an overarching androcentric ideal that applies to differing masculine roles. It seems though that the poet of the "Vṛtra hymn" recognizes this tension, as he coins the only Ṛgvedic appearance

of the compound "great warrior" (*mahāvīrá*, ṚV.1.32.6b).[44] To my mind, this neologism implies that the poet acknowledges Indra's standing as more than a *vīrá* when he confronts Vṛtra. This is a reasonable conclusion given that no other poet ever explicitly calls Indra a *vīrá* in his confrontation with Vṛtra[45] and that this poet explicitly calls Indra a *śū́ra* at the end of his hymn.[46]

The terms *vīrá* and *śū́ra* thus refer to two distinct ways of being a man and two forms of masculinity. This is not to propose that two classes of warrior exist. It would be wrong to think of a *vīrá* as a common foot soldier and a *śū́ra* as a high-ranking charioteer and lord. Both terms are androcentric ideological markers that poets encode in well-defined and separate semiotic and social realms, yet given Indra's example, a man can ideally embody both roles. The fact that a *śū́ra* has the obligation to slay Vṛtra and is connected with *śávas*, chariots, and commanding men underscores the specialized martial and political nature of this role. Ṛgvedic poets virtually stipulate that all Āryan males will be "brave men, warriors" (*vīrá-*), and this role is encoded in their identity from birth. In contrast, a "champion" (*śū́ra*) is never dominated or controlled by others (except Indra), which suggests that this role is reserved for privileged men who have proven their worth and excelled in battle, and who strive to control territory and natural resources through cattle raids and open warfare. Nonetheless, poets expect that such individuals will carry the highest martial burdens of early Vedic society on their shoulders as symbolized by the cosmic serpent Vṛtra. Like their war god in the cosmic realm, human champions should also confront any obstacle that impedes their tribal interests. The metaphorical image of such an obstacle is that of a snake encircling its prey and constricting it in its coils. For this reason, poets reproduce the idea that human champions are physically powerful so that they can exercise their strength against the "dragon" and his crushing grip. It is to the concept of *śávas* that we now turn.

The Role of *Śávas* in Defeating Vṛtra

We need to consider in more depth the role of *śávas* in the myth of Vṛtra's destruction because its use underscores one of the central themes that defines Indra's battle with the cosmic serpent, as well as inscribing the body of a *śū́ra* with a specific function. A poet from the oldest layer underscores the central role that Indra's physical strength plays in overcoming the serpent:

> ṚV.6.48.21: *sadyáś cid yásya carkṛtíḥ pári dyā́ṃ devó naíti sū́ryaḥ, tveṣáṃ śávo dadhire nā́ma yajñíyam marúto vṛtrahā́ṃ śávo jyéṣṭhaṃ vṛtrahā́ṃ śávaḥ.*

> "The one [Indra] whose celebrity even in a single day goes around heaven, like the god Sun; the Maruts established [that one's] fiery might [*śávas*], a trait worthy of sacrifice, the Vṛtra-smashing might [*śávas*], the most excellent Vṛtra-smashing might [*śávas*]."

This early poet twice defines *śávas* as "Vṛtra-smashing" (*vṛtrahán*) and qualifies it as a "trait worthy of sacrifice" (*nā́ma yajñíyam*). With these nuances in mind, other poet-priests ritually invoke their powerful war god so that he will destroy Vṛtra in the cosmic realm and remove any obstacles in their immediate world.[47] For example:

> ṚV.3.37.1: *vā́rtrahatyāya śávase pṛtanāṣā́hyāya ca, índra tvā́ vartayā masi*.
>
> "For might that smashes obstacles and dominates in battles, O Indra, we turn you here."[48]

This stanza highlights the importance of Indra's *śávas* in defeating Vṛtra, who oppresses the cosmos and restricts Āryan movement and access to natural resources.[49] Consider the following stanza from a late poet who emphasizes Vṛtra's act of crushing the world, presumably by constricting it within his coils:

> ṚV.1.52.10: *dyaúś cid asyā́mavāṁ áheḥ svanā́d áyoyavīd bhiyásā vájra indra te, vṛtrásya yád badbadhānásya rodasī máde sutásya śávasābhinac chíraḥ*.
>
> "Even Heaven, though capable of attacking, kept away from the sound of the serpent due to fear of it. The mace belongs to you, O Indra. When, in the exhilaration of pressed [*sóma*], you through might split the head of Vṛtra, who repeatedly pressed down upon the world halves."

One of the primary motifs in this myth is the contrast between enclosure and openness, confinement and space. The perennial battle between Indra and Vṛtra is defined by the larger motif of freedom versus constraint. The cosmic serpent ensnares all cosmic and natural resources and prevents the waters from flowing by wrapping them up in his coils, swallowing them, or enclosing them in a mountain. For example:

> ṚV.1.51.4: *tvám apā́m apidhā́nāvṛṇor ápādhārayaḥ párvate dā́numad vásu, vṛtráṃ yád indra śávasāvadhīr áhim ā́d ít sū́ryaṃ divy ā́rohayo dṛśé*.

> "You opened up the covers of the waters. You held up the treasure associated with Danu's son in the mountain. Since you have slain the serpent Vṛtra through might, then you surely made the sun rise in heaven in order to be seen."

ṚV.4.17.1: *tvám mahắṁ indra túbhyaṃ ha kṣắ ánu kṣatrám maṃhánā manyata dyaúḥ, tváṃ vṛtráṃ śávasā jaghanvắn sṛjáḥ síndhūṁr áhinā jagrasānắn.*

> "O Indra, you are great. To you Earth and Heaven willingly concede dominion. Having smashed Vṛtra through might, you release the rivers that had been swallowed by the serpent."

ṚV.8.12.26: *yadắ vṛtráṃ nadīvṛ́taṃ śávasā vajrinn ávadhīḥ, ắd ít te haryatā́ hárī vavakṣatuḥ.*

> "When you have slain Vṛtra, who covered the rivers, through might, O mace wielder, then surely your two desirable bay horses grew strong."

In the first stanza, spatial issues are paramount as Indra frees both the waters and the treasure in the mountain (most likely cattle) from their confinement, and his action also allows the sun to take its correct place in the sky.[50] It seems that the poet is conflating separate myths, as Indra usually is said to destroy Vṛtra to free the waters and then to open the mountain cave (*valá*) to free the sun and cows. In the second stanza, the gods Heaven and Earth, the definitive symbols of size and expanse, confirm Indra's "dominion" (*kṣatrá*) when the war god releases the waters from their confinement in the serpent's belly. In the third stanza, Vṛtra's destruction is again connected with freeing the cosmic waters, and we note that Indra's horses grow strong.[51] The main theme in this myth—the victory of might and freedom over constriction and confinement—also appears in the parallel Vala myth as the cave entraps sunlight and stolen cows. The use of the term *śávas* underscores Indra's role as a *śū́ra* in physically overpowering the early Vedic "dragon" and any confining force to release the necessities of life so that Āryans can thrive and prosper. In the human world, Vṛtra represents any obstacle or hindrance to early Vedic ritual and political concerns. It may be the case that poet-priests demonstrate their influence over the cosmos and natural world because they possess the ritual means to summon and deploy the divine champion against Vṛtra. This further allows them to legitimately claim a central participatory role in this ritualized act of theomarchy. This is definitely the case with the prototypical ritualists, the Aṅgirases, when they assist Indra in the Vala myth. There is however more to the use of *śávas* than first meets the eye. The term *śávas* actually carries a spatial connotation and for this reason, it

is embedded in the theme of freedom and openness versus constriction and confinement. Indeed, *śávas* denotes a form of strength that by definition pushes apart any opposing force and as such it could be translated literally as "swelling might." The following two sections will demonstrate this point.

Śávas and √*śū* "to swell"

What is evident in the use of *śávas* is that Ṛgvedic poets talk about Indra's strength in spatial terms. The term *śávas* derives from the verbal root √*śū* ("to swell, enlarge; to become massive, strong; to thrive, prosper"), which at its heart carries a spatial meaning.[52] For example, the use of √*śū* indicates that a human, whether friend or foe, swells in strength or size, or both.[53] This is also true for "exhilaration" (*máda*), "ferocity" (*śúṣma*), and perhaps a bull.[54] The metaphor of "swelling" implies growth, yet it can also signal newfound prosperity in the case of wealth and perhaps even a chariot.[55] In some cases it is unclear whether the verb denotes an increase in size, strength, or prosperity, or all three at once. For example, Indra and others cause a brave man (*vīrá*) to swell when he offers *sóma* to the war god.[56] One late poet clearly intends his use of √*śū* to evoke an increase in physical strength and size at the same time:

> ṚV.10.28.9d: *váyad vatsó vṛṣabháṃ śū́śuvānaḥ.*
>
> "The calf, swelling in size [or strength], will chase the bull."[57]

The verb √*śū* thus conveys a polysemic meaning that draws on several interrelated semantic fields pertaining to strength, size, and abundance.

It is significant then that the abstract noun *śávas* appears in four instances in collocation with √*śū* in a *figura etymologica*. Although this constitutes a small percentage of its total appearances (177 outside of compounds), these cases shed light on the spatial connotation of *śávas* and the relationship between physical strength and size. Consider a poet from the oldest layer who states:

> ṚV.6.19.2: *índram evá dhiṣáṇā sātáye dhād bṛhántam ṛṣvám ajáraṃ yúvānam, áṣāḷhena śávasā śū́śuvāṃsaṃ sadyáś cid yó vāvṛdhé ásāmi.*
>
> "Dhiṣaṇā has established Indra alone to win, the lofty towering one, ageless and youthful; who has become swollen in unconquerable might [*śávas*], who in just a single day became entirely grown."[58]

The poet's collocation of *śávas* and √*śū*, and his use of √*vṛdh* ("to grow, increase; to be or make strong, strengthen"), brings into sharp focus the relationship

between size and strength. The overall picture of this stanza indicates that Indra has grown in physical power and stature. The war god's lofty and towering state (*bṛhántam ṛṣvám*) also emphasizes this spatial image. The basic idea is that the stronger you are, the bigger you are, and vice versa. In Indra's case, absolute unchallenged strength is attested in cosmic expanse and breadth. Consider another family book stanza to Indra and Agni:

> ṚV.7.93.2: *tấ sānasí śavasānā hí bhūtáṃ sākaṃvṛ́dhā śávasā śūśuvấṃsā, kṣáyantau rāyó yávasasya bhū́reḥ pṛ́ṅktáṃ vā́jasya sthávirasya ghṛ́ṣveḥ.*
>
> "O you two who act with might [or are swelling], indeed you two are gain-bringing, simultaneously grown, having become swollen in might [*śávas*]. Controlling wealth, abundant pasturage, let the two of you mix the substantial and lively prize."[59]

This poet places considerable emphasis on the notion of "swelling" (*śavasānā . . . śávasā śūśuvấṃsā*) and "growth, increase" (√*vṛdh*).[60] We also note that the notion of increased size and strength corresponds to an increase in wealth and profit by way of controlling "abundant pasturage" (*yávasasya bhū́reḥ*). It is as if the massive bodies of Indra and Agni metaphorically signify the lands over which they should rule. A nonfamily book poet depicts a related image:

> ṚV.1.167.9: *nahí nú vo maruto ánty asmé ārā́ttāc cic chávaso ántam āpúḥ, té dhṛṣṇúnā śávasā śūśuvấṃsó 'rṇo ná dvéṣo dhṛṣatā́ pári ṣṭhuḥ.*
>
> "O Maruts, indeed they have never reached the limit of your might [*śávas*], whether in our midst or from far away. They, having become swollen in bold might [*śávas*], hemmed in hatred through their boldness, like a flood."

In both its appearances here, *śávas* carries at once a spatiophysical meaning of increased strength and size. The poet underscores the spatial connotation with the use of the phrase "no limit" (*nahí . . . ántam*), with markers of proximity and distance (*ánti, ārā́ttāt*), and also the *figura etymologica*. The Maruts' *śávas* is thus limitless and swelling (√*śū*), and their newly acquired expansive strength allows them to surround (*pári* √*sthā*) adversities in a courageous manner. This means that the *figura etymologica* is not just used for poetic alliteration. *Śávas* and √*śū* aptly fit an overall context in which an increase in strength also signifies an increase in size. If we foreground the spatial connotation of *śávas*, then the *figura etymologica* can equally mean "swell mightily in might" or "grow

large in size." Hence, Ṛgvedic poets deploy *śávas* to signify at once physical and spatial meanings.

The Limits of *Śávas*

In the stanza just cited (ṚV.1.167.9), no one can reach the limits of the Maruts' might (*nahí . . . -śávaso ántam*). The term *ánta* ("limit, end") usually appears in conjunction with a genitive noun, and the prepositional phrase designates spatial boundaries. For example, no one is able to reach the "outermost end of Viṣṇu's greatness" (*mahimnáḥ páram ántam*).[61] We note here that *mahimán*, like *mahitvá* elsewhere, conveys a spatial meaning. Heaven and Earth are unable to equal Indra's "expanse" (*ná . . . ánu vyácas*), nor can rivers obtain the "end of (his) space" (*rájaso ántam*).[62] The goddess Dawn spreads out (*á √prath*) from the end (*ántāt*) of heaven and earth.[63] The sacrificial altar (*védi*) is the "outermost end of the earth" (*páro ántaḥ pṛthivyā́ḥ*).[64] And individuals wander around (*pári √car*) the end of earth (*bhū́myā ántam*).[65] Finally, when *ánta* appears in the plural, it typically designates the limits of the heaven or earth. The noun *ánta* thus refers to the limits of space or of spatially defined objects.

Since *ánta* denotes spatial limitations, the idiomatic use of the phrase "no limit (or end) of might" (*ná ánta śávasaḥ*) underscores the spatial connotation of *śávas*; it makes sense metaphorically only if *śávas* also carries a spatial meaning. The point here is that this phrase certainly denotes Indra's inexhaustible strength, yet its spatial connotation also suggests that Indra's physical potential and cosmic activity cannot be impeded or constrained in any way. Consider an early poet's use of the phrase:

> ṚV.6.29.5: *ná te ántaḥ śávaso dhāyy asyá ví tú bābadhe ródasī mahitvā́, á tā́ sūríḥ pṛṇati tū́tujāno yū́thévāpsú samíjamāna ū́tí.*
>
> "No limit has been established for this might [*śávas*] of yours, thus with this greatness he [Indra] drove apart the two worlds. [Our] patron fulfills these things here, having thrust himself forth, as if one driving the herds in unison to the waters through [your] aid."[66]

This stanza refers to the common Ṛgvedic trope whereby the universe comes into existence through Indra's physical growth and exertion; and we note here that the poet equates Indra's actions with a ritual patron's movement, which is likened to driving cattle to water.[67] The poet's use of the noun *mahitvá* ("greatness") designates the means through which Indra drives apart (*ví √bādh*) the world halves, and it presumably functions here as a synonym of *śávas*, which

has no limit set for it.[68] It is noteworthy that elsewhere Indra's *śávas* appears to push (√*bādh*) Vṛtra apart in the cosmic realm.[69] Indra thus opens up the universe through his unlimited *śávas* and *mahitvá*. A poet from the final layer depicts a similar image in relation to Indra's cosmic strength and activity:

> ṚV.1.100.15: *ná yásya devā́ devátā ná mártā ā́paś caná śávaso ántam āpúḥ, sá prarikvā́ tvákṣasā kṣmó diváś ca marútvān no bhavatv índra ūtí.*
>
> "The limit of whose might neither gods through divinity, nor mortals, nor even the waters have obtained. He projects beyond earth and heaven through [his] creativity: accompanied by the Maruts, let Indra be present for us with aid."

Indra here "projects beyond" (*prá* √*ric*) heaven and earth, which are the primary symbols of cosmic size and expanse.[70] The phrase *ná ánta śávasaḥ* in the initial hemistich presumably calls to mind a similar spatial meaning. Indra's inexhaustible strength enables him to go beyond any cosmic limitations or boundaries. In this regard, another poet explicitly states that Indra's unlimited strength will overcome any form of confinement:

> ṚV.1.54.1ab, to Indra: *mā́ no asmín maghavan pṛtsv áṃhasi nahí te ántaḥ śávasaḥ parīṇáśe.*
>
> "O munificent one, do not [leave] us in narrow straits during battles, for the limit of your might cannot be attained."

In this hemistich, limitless power is the very thing that human warriors need to offset "narrow straits" (*áṃhas*).[71] The term *áṃhas* is central to Ṛgvedic ideology as it denotes any form of distress, narrowness, oppression, or constraint that a poet, warrior, or tribe may face and overcome when confronting other Āryans, non-Āryans, or even Vṛtra (Schmitt 1967: 189; Gonda 1975: 157). For this reason, the poet pleads with his war god to exercise his strength in aid of the warriors. The use of the idiom "no limit of might" (*ná ánta śávasaḥ*) thus underscores the way in which *śávas* is embedded within the wider Ṛgvedic motif of victory over any form of constraint or constriction, while also highlighting the way in which the term itself signifies this motif. To stress the point, the basic spatiophysical metaphor is that the stronger you are, the bigger you are, and vice versa. In Indra's case, poets literalize the metaphor as the war god's body is as large as the universe, and for this reason his power is unattainable and unfettered.[72] Consider a family book poet who brings together many of the themes encountered so far in the following stanza:

ṚV.7.21.6: *abhí krátvendra bhūr ádha jmán ná te vivyaṅ mahimā́naṃ rájāṃsi, svénā hí vṛtráṃ śávasā jaghántha ná śátrur ántaṃ vividad yudhā́ te.*

"O Indra, be superior on earth through resolve. The realms cannot contain your greatness. For through your own might you smashed Vṛtra. No rival will find your limit in battle."

Indra's greatness surpasses the universe; he slays Vṛtra with *śávas*, and he has no limitations (*ná ánta*) in battle. The appearances of *ánta* in collocation with *śávas* thus indicates that Ṛgvedic poets conceive of physical strength in spatial terms. The use of the phrase *ná ánta śávasaḥ* would call to mind the sheer bulk of Indra's massive body and physical potential, which can push apart any form of constriction and cannot be limited by cosmic boundaries or constraints (e.g., heaven and earth, *áṃhas*, the constricting force of the serpent's coils).[73]

The motif of strength and size is also attested in the collocation of *śávas* with √*prath* ("to spread apart, stretch out, enlarge"):

ṚV.8.3.6ab: *índro mahnā́ ródasī paprathac cháva índraḥ sū́ryam arocayat.*

"Through [his] greatness, Indra has spread apart the world halves, [as his] might. Indra caused the sun to shine."

The grammatical function of *śávas* in this hemistich is problematic because it appears in the accusative case. Geldner (1951, 2: 286) translates it instrumentally in apposition with *mahnā́*, presumably because he thinks that an accusative translation makes no sense. This is plausible since Indra separates the world halves through his greatness, and *śávas* appears elsewhere in collocation with *mahimán*. The spatial connotation of *śávas* may however be at the forefront of the poet's use of the term; that is, he places it in apposition with the world halves because Indra's strength metonymically stands for the expansive state it brings into being. Two other poets depict a similar image when they state that Indra's *śávas* is like sky or heaven on account of its expanse (*prathimán*).[74] Consider another stanza to Indra:

ṚV.8.3.4: *ayáṃ sahásram ṛ́ṣibhiḥ sáhaskṛtaḥ samudrá iva paprathe, satyáḥ só asya mahimā́ gṛṇe śávo yajñéṣu viprarā́jye.*

"This one, made with dominating strength by the thousand seers, spread himself out like the ocean. Real, that greatness of his is sung, his might, in the sacrifices, in the kingdom of the inspired."[75]

The poet's use of √*prath* (and the ocean simile) illuminates the wider spatial image, and this is also stressed by the juxtaposition of *mahimán* and *śávas*.[76] Consider one more stanza, in which an early poet plays with a similar image in regard to the Maruts:

> ṚV.5.87.6 *apāró vo mahimā́ vṛddhaśavasas tveṣáṃ śávo 'vatv evayā́marut, sthā́tāro hí prásitau saṃdṛ́śi sthána té na uruṣyatā́ nidáḥ śuśukvā́ṃso nā́gnáyaḥ.*
>
> "Your greatness has no end, O you of strengthened might [voc. *vṛddhaśavas*-]. Let [your] fiery might [*śávas*] help [us], accompanied by swift traveling Maruts. Indeed, you are the ones who stand firm at the onslaught in the sight of all. Make a wide space for us from scorn, like intensely burning fires."[77]

The poet emphasizes the spatial image with the vocative compound *vṛddhaśavas*- ("of strengthened or increased might"). In addition, "endless greatness" (*apāró . . . mahimā́*) and *śávas* designate immense physical power and reach, which presumably allow the Maruts to distance (√*uruṣy*) their worshippers from hatred. Another poet expresses the same idea in the following line:

> ṚV.8.25.10c: *uruṣyántu marúto vṛddhā́śavasaḥ.*
>
> "Let the Maruts of strengthened might make a wide space."[78]

The consistent appearance of nouns and verbs conveying spatial meanings such as *ánta*, *ródasī*, *mahimán/mahitvá/majmán*, √*śū*, √*vṛdh*, √*uruṣy*, and √*prath* illuminate the spatial context in which the term *śávas* is embedded and the spatial connotation it signifies. The immense swelling strength of Indra and the Maruts allows them to open up and dominate the natural environment, to overcome limitations, and to resist any constriction or confinement.[79] The Ṛgvedic motif of size and strength is not limited to the use of *śávas*; it is just intrinsic to its meaning and function. This is equally true for the etymon *máh* ("great, greatness, great power") and its derivatives. As we will see in the next chapter, the idea of physical increase is also encoded in the use of the term *ójas* ("power, strength"). Like *śávas*, *ójas* is related to a root that means "to grow or be strong." In semiotic, poetic, and physical terms, *śávas* signifies the swelling power of a *śū́ra*, who by his very embodied nature as literally the "big/strong man" drives apart and destroys the cosmic serpent's constricting force. Ṛgvedic poets encode in the body of a *śū́ra* not only physical power and size, but also the highest martial responsibility to deal with any impediments or difficulties that

may encircle or constrain the interests of the migrating tribes. Several poets even suggest that Vṛtra poses this danger because he too is growing in size.[80] Hence, the motif not only involves Vṛtra's constricting nature, but also his potential to enclose and eclipse open tracts of land, livestock, natural resources, and the universe itself, all of which should be under the control of Indra and, by extension, the Āryan tribes.

Conclusion

As we have seen, Indra's mythic battle with Vṛtra for control of the universe reflects one of the dominant concerns of Ṛgvedic ritual participants: the victory of expanse, openness, and freedom over oppression, confinement, and captivity. As the "obstacle" par excellence, Vṛtra is the mythologized paradigmatic impediment to Āryan migratory concerns, and as a result he is the supreme adversary of all Āryans. He obstructs Indra from opening up and controlling the cosmos, and he prevents access to natural resources, waterways, and cattle. This ritualized myth illuminates an entrenched martial ideology of pastoralist peoples and their ever-present concern with the natural environment and the recurring need to control territory, grazing grounds, and access to waterways during wide-ranging seasonal migrations. This accords with Oberlies' (1998: 347–458) view that Indra, among other deities, symbolizes the aspirations and activities of Āryan tribes during seasonal movement (*yóga*) as they strive to secure new territory and pasturage and to conduct cattle raids and warfare. Oberlies also states that the term *várivas* ("wideness"), as an antonym of *áṃhas* ("constraint; narrow straits"), points to territory won by the warlords in battle with enemies (460–461).

The term *śávas* features in Vṛtra's destruction because the cosmic serpent is the definitive symbol of universal, territorial, and martial constraint. For this reason, poets deploy *śávas* (literally "swelling might") to offset Vṛtra's constricting force. Furthermore, poets engender the role of a *śū́ra* with the highest values and construct his body to open up space and drive away the cosmic serpent. The *śū́ra* is literally the "big/strong man," and his body is supposed to be massive, broad, and powerful. This physical metaphor defines the way in which he should understand and display his body; it also underscores the central responsibility of this role, since the *śū́ra* should resist any threats, while extending himself in capturing territory and natural resources. In both the divine and human realms, the term *śū́ra* thus refers to an expert warrior, a tribal champion, who is duty bound to take full responsibility for removing all obstacles that prevent access to natural resources and block migratory paths. The body of

the *śū́ra*, particularly his strength (*śávas*), constitutes a fundamental sign of the whole mythic battle, and at the level of discourse ritualists turn his body into a weapon.

Given this, let me make a final observation about Indra's battle with the cosmic serpent. Vṛtra symbolizes the natural environment when not under rightful Āryan rule, and his destruction epitomizes the constant struggle of Āryan warlords for mastery over natural resources. Since the term *vṛtrá* in the plural frequently designates real-world tribulations and enemies, this suggests that human *śū́ra-* had to deal with such "obstacles" regularly. The Ṛgvedic hymns also indicate that the Āryan tribes constantly struggle with the indigenous population and one another for wealth and pastoral lands. Vṛtra can thus in part be understood as a dominant source of and explanation for confrontation. Vṛtra is not just a mythic enemy to be overcome in cosmic terms; he is also one of the primary causes and justifications for seasonal skirmishes and sustained land wars. One Āryan could readily perceive another as the embodiment of Vṛtra, thereby making him a legitimate target for sustained violence and ritually endorsed murder. The Ṛgvedic tradition projects an image of itself in which the Āryan tribes are beset on all sides by a cosmic serpent and snake-like enemies who seek to constrain, constrict, and ultimately crush their progress. For this reason, ritualists encode the role of a human champion in cosmic terms, while placing his violence within an elevated framework that aligns such activity with Vṛtra's destruction. Ṛgvedic poet-priests thus ensure that their human champion fulfills his role by leading the clans to victory over the demonized enemy Other and every obstacle that hinders Āryan migrations, concerns, and customs. To be considered a hero in early Vedic culture, a *śū́ra* needs to display an unwavering willingness to fight and, presumably to die in battle against Vṛtra, and this expectation is encoded in his massive, powerful body. It is therefore the constant and deadly presence of the "dragon" that determines what is heroic and what exactly is heroism in early Vedic culture.

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4

Strong Arms and Drinking Strength

The previous chapters have shown that poets encode male roles (*nár*, *vīrá*, *śū́ra*, *rā́jan*) and masculine qualities (*nṛ́mṇa*, *paúṃsya*, *vīryà*, *śávas*) in a man's body, Indra's in particular. To understand the construction of male identity in the *Ṛ́gveda*, we must explore in more depth the concept of physical strength because ritual practitioners deploy it to shape Āryan men's perception and use of their bodies. We have already seen that the term *śávas* signifies physical power, especially that of a *śū́ra*, and poets embed it in the myth of Vṛ́tra's destruction for poetic, ritual, and political purposes. The ubiquitous term *ójas* also means "power, strength"; it is related to the verbal root √*ukṣ/vakṣ* ("to increase, grow; to be great; to be or make strong").[1] It primarily manifests in the "body" (*tanū́*) and "arms" (*bāhú-*) of the paradigmatic manly warriors, Indra and the Maruts.[2] A quick survey of its use highlights the central role that physical strength plays in Ṛ́gvedic ideology. With his *ójas*, Indra smashes (√*han*) and pulverizes (*prá* √*mṛ*) rivals.[3] He destroys (*ví* √*naś*), crushes (*sám* √*han*), and splits apart (*ví* √*bhid*) forts.[4] The war god strikes out (*nír* √*han*) Vṛ́tra from the waters and slays (√*vadh*) him,[5] and he breaks (√*bhañj*) an enemy's rage (*manyú*).[6] Their *ójas* enables Indra and Varuṇa to drill out (*ánu* √*tṛd*) holes for the waters,[7] and the Maruts push up (*ūrdhváṃ* √*nud*) a cistern and split apart a mountain, perhaps, the same way.[8] With his own *ójas*, Soma rends asunder (*ví* √*ruj*) sturdy objects and releases the cows by cutting open (*nír* √*kṛt*) a stone.[9] Through Soma's *ójas*, Indra shook apart (*ví* √*ṛd/ard*)

the serpent.[10] Lastly, the All Gods (*víśve devā́ḥ*) possess *ójas*, keep adversaries at bay[11] and prop up (√*skambh*) the cosmic realms.[12] All of these verbs denote physical, if not violent, action achieved through a display of strength.[13] Like *śávas*, the term *ójas* thus denotes physical power, which belongs especially to the strongest man, Indra.[14] It is easy to see that Indra's massive, powerful, and manly body takes up a huge amount of symbolic space in Ṛgvedic rhetoric and ideology. The dominant, highly glamorized image of Indra is that of a violent, strong, hyper-Āryan male. Through sheer brawn, Indra pushes apart the world halves, Heaven and Earth, and sets the universe in order. He battles Vṛtra to release primordial waters, dominates human enemies and the natural environment, and splits open the cosmic mountain so as to free imprisoned sunlight and cattle. This early Vedic cosmogony depends on Indra's immense and powerful physique.[15]

Body theory asks us to see the ways in which the physical self and representations of such are closely linked to institutions of social and political power, and more specifically the way in which discourse about the body constructs circumscribed ways that individuals should understand and use their bodies. As we have seen, Āryan men are supposed to act like Indra and embody his physical qualities. Indra's body—especially its virility, masculinity, and raw power—functions as a dominant symbol of male identity. While we can infer that men conditioned themselves through physical acts, Ṛgvedic poets repeatedly assert that the male body is symbolically shaped through ritual performances. Scholars have long recognized that one of the cardinal functions of Ṛgvedic rituals is to strengthen Indra for cosmic supremacy and battle. The text is replete with examples. *Sóma* and ritual praise (*stóma*) are the primary means to make Indra powerful enough to take on enemies, and the strengthening process highlights the way in which ritual participants constitute and empower their war god. This also means that the individuals who control the representation of Indra's body and the ritual practices that empower it command a certain amount of power over men who are empowered in the same way as their war god and think of him as a role model. This chapter will thus argue that the power ritual practitioners wield over Indra's body directly parallels their influence over the cosmos, political realities, and fellow ritual participants, especially warriors and chieftains. That is to say, the way in which Ṛgvedic poet-priests strengthen Indra's body constitutes a major ritual strategy wherein they construct and control individual bodies and the body of society, while reproducing the importance and centrality of their own ritual tradition. Hence, in order to illustrate this strategy this chapter will examine the poetic construction of the male body, especially Indra's, and more specifically the way in which ritual participants encode the concept of physical strength in divine and human men for social and political ends.

Strong Arms

Let us begin by examining a stanza from an early poet who provides us with a rich image about the way in which the Maruts embody both physical and social ideals:

> ṚV.5.57.6: *ṛṣṭáyo vo maruto áṃsayor ádhi sáha ójo bāhvór vo bálaṃ hitám, nṛmṇā́ śīrṣásv āyudhā́ rátheṣu vo víśvā vaḥ śrír ádhi tanū́ṣu pipiśe.*
>
> "O Maruts, lances are placed on your two shoulders; dominance [*sáhas*], power [*ójas*] and strength [*bála*] are placed on your arms [*bāhú-*]; manly qualities [or powers; *nṛmṇá-*] are placed on your heads; weapons are placed on your chariots. All this finery has been marked on your bodies."

In this stanza, weapons and physical characteristics are placed on the Maruts' bodies, particularly their shoulders, arms, and heads. Weapons, of course, symbolize martial identity and warfare. The root √*piś* ("to cut, mark; to adorn") seems to express an indeterminate act of displaying the Maruts' manly characteristics on their bodies, perhaps—yet speculatively—in the form of tattoos, body paint, or scarification.[16] This stanza also indicates that the Maruts' physique is not completely natural, as their strength and manhood come in part from ritual processes that inscribe such qualities on their bodies. This reified image may reflect one of the symbolic ways that human warriors display their embodied masculine and martial identities. Moreover, the poet synecdochically reduces the physical power of the Maruts to its most natural site: the arms (*bāhú-*). Later poets reproduce this sentiment in the compound *bāhvòjas*, which means "possessing power in the arms; strong-armed." For example, a book 8 poet states:

> ṚV.8.20.6: *ámāya vo maruto yā́tave dyaúr jíhīta úttarā bṛhát, yátrā náro dédiśate tanū́ṣv ā́ tvákṣāṃsi bāhvòjasaḥ.*
>
> "For your onslaught to travel by, O Maruts, Heaven moves higher, loftily, where the men [Maruts], whose power is in [their] arms [*bāhvòjas-*], repeatedly display [their] creative energies on [their] bodies."[17]

Like the previous stanza, this one states that as strong-armed men, the Maruts display their creative powers (*tvákṣas-*) on their bodies,[18] perhaps in some decorative form. It is no surprise that another book 8 poet states that Indra is victorious in battle because of his powerful arms:

ṚV.8.93.2: *náva yó navatím púro bibhéda bāhvòjasā, áhiṃ ca vṛtrahắvadhīt.*

"The one who split the nine and ninety forts through the power of [his] arms, and as Vṛtra smasher slew the serpent."[19]

Consider a late poet who depicts a similar image in the final layer:

ṚV.10.111.6: *vájreṇa hí vṛtrahắ vṛtrám ástar ádevasya śúśuvānasya māyắḥ, ví dhṛ́ṣṇo átra dhṛ́ṣatā́ jaghanthắthābhavo maghavan bāhvòjāḥ.*

"For with [his] mace Vṛtra smasher scattered Vṛtra, [scattered] the manifold craftiness of the godless one who had been swollen. You, O bold one, boldly smashed [him] apart there. And thus you became one whose power is in [his] arms, O munificent one."

The sequence of this stanza is suggestive in that Indra acquires power in his arms after he slays Vṛtra. As we will see, Indra is strengthened before his cosmic battle. Since Indra can claim outright cosmic supremacy after he destroys Vṛtra, perhaps here the poet intends his use of the compound *bāhvòjas* to signal more than just physical power. That is to say, Indra's physical power can metonymically stand for his position of cosmological and political supremacy because it brings about such a state. If this is the case, then the use of the compound *bāhvòjas* sheds some light on the famous Puruṣasūkta hymn (ṚV.10.90) from the final layer of the *Ṛgveda*, which documents the sacrifice of a cosmic man. In the hymn's most far-reaching stanza, the poet presents a new and systematic vision of a division of society into four distinct classes, each represented by a body part of the sacrificial victim:

ṚV.10.90.12: *brāhmaṇò 'sya múkham āsīd bāhū́ rājanyàḥ kṛtáḥ, ūrū́ tád asya yád vaíśyaḥ padbhyắṃ śūdró ajāyata.*

"The priest was his mouth. The nobleman was made his two arms. As to his thighs, that is what the commoner was. From his two feet the servant was born."

The term "nobleman" (*rājanyà*) in the second line is a neologism to Ṛgvedic diction, and as a hapax legomenon its appearance here points to the lateness of this hymn, as the term is more common in the other *Saṃhitā* and classical *Brāhmaṇa* texts. It most likely refers to the burgeoning class of martial and political nobility, who will take the more common title *kṣatríya*. Like the other classes, the poet situates the social and political position of warriors and

chieftains within the cosmic sacrificial body of a primordial man. Scholars have long recognized that the arms (*bāhú-*) here symbolize the nobleman's expected role in martial and political arenas: his arms at once represent the ideals of physical might and political power. Nevertheless, the image is more complex than this. Since Indra and the Maruts are the definitive models of what a strong-armed individual should be, then to be born from the arms of the cosmic man means that violence and domination are not only encoded in a warrior's body, localized in his arms, but also that when a man exercises physical might he acts in accordance with the cosmic plan—though perhaps the stanza also implies that his martial activity should be tempered by his priestly mouthpiece. While the Puruṣasūkta hymn constitutes a late Brāhmaṇical rethinking of the male body with a reified class of priests on top and a new image of a unified, yet stratified body politic, the precedent for a warrior's embodied place in this hierarchy appears much earlier in the *Ṛgveda*. Consequently, while the poet may be appealing to the image of Indra and the Maruts' powerful arms to connect warriors and chieftains with the martial and political function of these gods, he is also usurping the central place of such gods in Ṛgvedic ideology by subjecting the identities of men to a reimagined sociopolitical order portrayed in the image of a cosmic man who is himself subject to the forces and dominance of sacrifice. It is also noteworthy that their place in society is derived from being born through a sacrifice; to put it another way, a man's social status depends on a form of ritual rebirth (I will return to this topic at the end of the chapter). The Puruṣasūkta hymn thus presents us with a substantial reformulation of Vedic ritual, social, and political relationships, and it constructs a form of masculinity founded on the image of a universal everyman rather than on the manly war god Indra. Indeed, it seems that the poet is deliberately rethinking manliness to legitimize a different post-Ṛgvedic worldview, yet attaching it to the *Ṛgveda* to legitimize his vision as authentically Vedic.

Cosmic Political Power

If a man's arms embody both physical and political power, this suggests that the term *ójas* can signify both strength and authority. It is no surprise that in many cultures the concept of political power is often expressed by way of physical metaphors. Nevertheless, in the *Ṛgveda* the relationship between physical and political power is more than just metaphoric as ritual practitioners actively fuse the two realities to ensure that political authority depends on a ritually constructed understanding of the body. We can see this in one example as Indra's physical power enables his cosmic supremacy:

ṚV.8.6.15: *ná dyā́va índram ójasā nā́ntárikṣāṇi vajríṇam, ná vivyacanta bhū́mayaḥ.*

"Neither the heavens, nor the atmospheres encompass the mace-wielding Indra due to [his] power [*ójas*], nor have the earths."[20]

Like *śávas*, *ójas* here appears in a spatial context as Indra physically resists the definitive markers of cosmic space from encompassing (√*vyac*) him. Other poets express similar ideas about Indra's domination of cosmic phenomena through his immense power. This is apparent in one case in which Indra makes the earth the "counterpart" (*pratimā́na*) of his *ójas*:

ṚV.1.52.12: *tvám asyá pāré rájaso vyòmanaḥ svábhūtyojā ávase dhṛṣanmanaḥ, cakṛṣé bhū́mim pratimā́nam ójaso 'páḥ svàḥ paribhū́r eṣy ā́ dívam.*

"At the outer limits of space of the vault [of heaven], you, who possess self-existent power [*svábhūtyojas*-], in order to help [us], O you of daring mind, made the earth as the counterpart of [your] power [*ójas*]. Surrounding the waters and the sun you go towards heaven."[21]

The possessive compound *svábhūtyojas* is a hapax legomenon. The term *svábhūti*- may mean "self-existent," which implies that Indra inherently possesses *ójas*; though his strength also comes from ritual processes. *Svábhūti* may also mean that Indra's power is not only natural, but also independent; that is, completely unparalleled and not subject to anything else. We can compare it to the compound *abhíbhūtyojas*, which indicates that Indra's *ójas* corresponds to a state of supremacy (*abhíbhūti*-).[22] This sheds some light on why the poet makes Indra's strength the earth's "counterpart" or "match" (*pratimā́na*). The term *pratimā́na* does not mean that the earth is Indra's equal, but rather that it is the realm he "measures himself against" (*práti* √*mā* "to measure against; to copy, imitate"). The term *pratimā́na* thus refers to an asymmetrically aligned object for which Indra is its match. In this case, the earth functions as a foil for just how great the war god's power is. This is evident elsewhere as one poet states that the entire cosmos, with its threefold division (*triviṣṭidhā́tu*), is the "counterpart" of Indra's *ójas*, yet the war god is strengthened beyond the world and has no enemies.[23] In addition, a stanza from the great Indra hymn (ṚV.2.12) implies that he can beat even the strongest man against whom he might be pitted:

ṚV.2.12.9: *yásmān ná ṛté vijáyante jánāso yáṃ yúdhyamānā ávase hávante, yó víśvasya pratimā́nam babhū́va yó acyutacyút sá janāsa índraḥ.*

> "Without whom the peoples cannot be victorious; whom they invoke for help when they fight; the one who is a match for anyone, who shakes the unshakable; he, O peoples, is Indra."

The use of *pratimā́na* here presumably does not mean that Indra can be challenged in battle, but rather that the war god can defeat anyone whom he confronts. If we apply the poet's collocation of *víśvasya pratimā́nam* ("a match for anyone, everyone") to the following stanza, then the tribes contend for the war god's support in battle because he is the "counterpart or match" of any opponent:

> ṚV.1.102.6: *gojítā bāhū́ ámitakratuḥ simáḥ kármankarmañ chatámūtiḥ khajaṃkaráḥ, akalpá índraḥ pratimā́nam ójasā́thā jánā ví hvayante siṣāsávaḥ.*
>
> "The one of endless resolve has himself arms that win cattle, in every action he provides a hundred advantages, he instigates melee. In the disorder [of battle], Indra is [everyone's] match due to [his] power [*ójas*]. Thus the tribes, desiring to win, compete to invoke him."[24]

The idea that Indra's strength is the *pratimā́na* of the cosmos, earth, and all adversaries suggests that he can legitimately stamp his power and control over such phenomena.[25] This is also indicated in cases in which Indra shows the measure (√*mā*) of his *ójas* against various opponents or cosmic realities.[26]

Ṛgvedic poets thus state that when Indra exercises his physical strength his position of cosmological or political supremacy is substantiated. An early poet seems to play on the double meaning of *ójas* as signifying not only physical might, but also cosmic and political power:

> ṚV.5.31.13: *yé cākánanta cākánanta nū́ té mártā amṛ́ta mó té áṃha áran, vāvandhí yájyūṁr utá téṣu dhehy ójo jáneṣu yéṣu te syā́ma.*
>
> "Those who take pleasure will now take pleasure. The mortals, O immortal, do not let them encounter narrow straits. Respect the worshipful ones and establish power [*ójas*] among your tribes, among whom may we be."

In another stanza, ritual participants approach the deities Heaven and Earth to substantiate their own terrestrial dominance:

> ṚV.1.160.5: *té no gṛṇāné mahinī máhi śrávaḥ kṣatráṃ dyāvāpṛthivī dhāsatho bṛhát, yénābhí kṛṣṭíṣ tatánāma viśváhā panā́yyam ójo asmé sám invatam.*

> "O great ones, being extolled, the two of you will establish for us great fame, lofty dominion, O Heaven and Earth, through which we will stretch out our communities every day. Compel to us power [*ójas*] worthy of respect."[27]

For this poet, "great reputation" (*máhi śrávas*) and "lofty dominion" (*bṛhát kṣatrá*) go hand in hand with power (*ójas*), which is defined here by a sociopolitical metaphor as it commands respect. As such, the poet seeks these qualities from the definitive symbols of universal power, Heaven and Earth, while expressing his concern to expand his communities under divine auspices.[28] In a similar vein, an early poet highlights the way in which individuals covet Indra's power, yet defer to it:

> ṚV.5.32.9-10: *kó asya śúṣmaṃ táviṣīṃ varāta éko dhánā bharate ápratītaḥ, imé cid asya jráyaso nú devī́ índrasyaújaso bhiyásā jihāte. ny àsmai devī́ svádhitir jihīta índrāya gātúr uśatíva yeme, sáṃ yád ójo yuváte víśvam ābhir ánu svadhā́vne kṣitáyo namanta.*
>
> "Who will check his ferocity, his vigor? Alone, the one unable to be assailed carries away the stakes. Even now these two goddesses move away from fear of his reach, of Indra's power [*ójas*]. The goddess Independence places herself beneath him. The way yielded itself to Indra like a willing woman. When absolute power [*ójas*] is theirs, the settlements bow to the independent one."[29]

In these two stanzas, the poet portrays Indra's unbridled terrifying demeanor and brute force by way of sexually charged metaphors involving male dominance and female subservience.[30] The feminine dual noun *devī́* ("goddesses") refers here to the cosmic parents, father Sky or Heaven and mother Earth, who move away from fear of Indra's reach (*jráyas*) and power (*ójas*).[31] The image most likely refers to the growth of Indra's massive body and his cosmogonic act of driving apart the world halves. The hymn in which these stanzas appear also documents Indra's destruction of Vṛtra. Indra thus claims outright cosmic supremacy once he has expanded the universe and defeated his cosmic archnemesis. Like *śávas*, the term *ójas* is embedded in the motif of Indra's massive size and strength as he drives away or destroys any threats, whether cosmic or natural. It is presumably for this reason that the settlements approach Indra, as the extent of his physical activity represents and justifies their claim for absolute political power (*víśvam ójas*)—although we note that their authority is subject to Indra as they reverentially bow before him. In this vein, another family book poet states that Indra's

strength prompts ritual participants to defer to him in his priestly role as Bṛhaspati:

> ṚV.3.62.5: *śúcim arkaír bṛ́haspátim adhvaréṣu namasyata, ánāmy ója ā́ cake.*
>
> "With chants, all of you bow in homage to bright Bṛhaspati at the rites. I cherish here his unbending power."

The adjective *ánāmin* ("unbending") suggests that Indra's power is desired because it will not collapse or yield under pressure, and presumably because it will bow before no one. In its only other Ṛgvedic appearance, the adjective *ánāmin* qualifies the noun *kṣatrá*, which denotes political rule and dominion.[32] In the final layer of the text, a poet even juxtaposes *kṣatrá* and *ójas*:

> ṚV.10.180.3: *índra kṣatrám abhí vāmám ójo 'jāyathā vṛṣabha carṣaṇīnā́m, ápānudo jánam amitrayántam urúṃ devébhyo akṛṇor ulokám.*
>
> "O Indra, you were born to [desired] dominion, desired power, O bull of the boundary people. You pushed away the tribe that made no alliance, for the gods you made a wide space."

Since Indra's expansion of space for the gods corresponds to an unchallengeable state for humans, then it seems that political power and physical strength overlap because the latter brings about the former.

In a grander fashion, a nonfamily book poet states that the entire cosmos acquiesces to Indra's aggressive manliness and strength:

> ṚV.1.57.5: *bhū́ri ta indra vīryàṃ táva smasy asyá stotúr maghavan kā́mam ā́ pṛṇa, ánu te dyaúr bṛhatī́ vīryàm mama iyáṃ ca te pṛthiví nema ójase.*
>
> "O Indra, your manliness is abundant; we are yours. O munificent one, fulfill the wish of the praiser. Lofty heaven has been measured out according to your manliness and the earth here bowed before your power."

Likewise, a family book poet aligns physical subjugation with a state of political dominance as Indra bends down (*ní* √*nam*) "those that had to be bent" (*nántva-*):

> ṚV.2.24.2: *yó nántvāny ánaman ny ójasotā́dardar manyúnā śámbarāṇi ví, prā́cyāvayad ácyutā bráhmaṇas pátir ā́ cāviśad vásumantaṃ ví párvatam.*

> "As the one who bent low those that had to be bent through [your] power, you repeatedly split apart the fortifications through [your] rage. The lord of the sacred formulation shook forth the unshakable and entered into the mountain full of treasure."[33]

Anger and physical force are coterminous qualities for Ṛgvedic poets as the terms *manyú* ("rage, fury") and *ójas* appear together several times outside the family books.[34] More important, the image of bending the unbending is not only physical; it also parallels those political scenarios we have just considered in which various figures willingly bow down to Indra because of his strength. Hence, Indra's physical act of forcing enemies down corresponds to a political act of subjugation and deference, both of which are signaled by the use of *ójas*.

The term *ójas* therefore signifies at once physical strength and the power of rulership, authority, and dominance. Many poets even play on both meanings.[35] For example, a nonfamily book poet underscores Indra's powerful state of rulership:

> ṚV.8.6.26: *yád aṅgá taviṣīyása índra prarā́jasi kṣitī́ḥ, mahā́ṁ apārá ójasā.*
>
> "Since, to be sure, you act vigorously, O Indra, you rule over the settlements, as the great and unparalleled one due to [your] power."

Elsewhere, *ójas* appears in several instances with the verb *ví √rāj* ("to shine out; to rule afar").[36] We also see that Indra's commandments are upheld (*dhṛtávrata*) when the god is ritually connected with *ójas*.[37] Heaven, Earth, and the immortal gods obey Indra's *ójas*.[38] And the two kingly gods, Indra and Varuṇa, stand in the vanguard of battle and possess "power over the communities" (du. voc. *kṛṣṭyojasā*; although this compound could equally mean "whose power comes from the communities").[39] Of all Ṛgvedic poets, the Kāṇva and Āṅgirasa families of books 1 and 8 depict Indra's strength in explicitly political terms; they alone use the phrase *íśāna- ójasā*, whereby Indra is "acting as master due to [his] power."[40] For example:

> ṚV.1.11.8: *índram íśānam ójasābhí stómā anūṣata, sahásraṃ yásya rātáya utá vā sánti bhū́yasīḥ.*
>
> "The praises have bellowed out to Indra, acting as master due to [his] power, whose gifts are a thousand or even greater."
>
> ṚV.8.6.41: *ṛ́ṣir hí pūrvajā́ ásy éka íśāna ójasā, índra coṣkūyáse vásu.*
>
> "You are indeed the ancient born seer, acting solely as master due to [your] power. O Indra, you repeatedly stoke the treasure."[41]

ṚV.8.17.9: *índra préhi purás tváṃ víśvasyéśāna ójasā, vṛtrā́ṇi vṛtrahañ jahi.*

"O Indra, go forth in front, being master of everything due to [your] power; O smasher of Vṛtra [obstacles], smash obstacles."

ṚV.8.32.14: *āyantā́ram máhi sthirám pṛ́tanāsu śravojítam, bhū́rer íśānam ójasā.*

"Him, drawing the great firm [bow], whom in battles won fame, being master of abundance due to [his] power . . ."[42]

The use of the phrase *íśāna- ójasā* underscores the way in which Indra's strength substantiates his position of political mastery. Moreover, it is only because the war god possesses immense physical power that he is able to rule over cosmic realities and friend and foe alike. Hence, poets embed Indra's strength in a political ideology as physical power corresponds to political standing and authority—the physical is political, and vice versa.[43] Since the term *ójas* can signify both physical and political power, its use highlights a key way in which early Vedic poets express political power by way of physical metaphors, while also reducing political authority to a physical ideology. Its use also foregrounds the way in which poets construct the male body and ascribe to it brute force, as well as authority and dominance. Indra's hypermasculine body is constructed in violence, and his right to rule is attested in raw strength.

Strengthening Indra

This brings us to a fundamental question: Where does Indra's power come from? Across all layers of the *Ṛgveda*, poet-priests state that Indra needs to be strengthened and that such empowerment comes from ritual practices. In problematizing Indra's body as an object of discourse and a discursive formation, continually reimagined and redefined in ritual performances, we can see a fundamental way in which poet-priests assert and sustain their own ritual and political interests. Indra's body is a dominant symbol of masculinity and of the social body of Āryan men, and also one of the primary sites in which Ṛgvedic ritual practitioners struggle for control of the early Vedic body politic because, as we will now see, the strengthening process is both physical and political. ("Body politic" here refers to the means and ways by which poet-priests construct and legitimize an ideology that regulates, conditions, and controls individuals and the symbolism of their bodies for various ends.) The point here is that poet-priests make their ritual practices indispensable to the

wider community by maintaining that Indra cannot achieve his full physical or political potential without *sóma* and *stóma* to strengthen him. We will also see that this is equally true for human warriors and chieftains.

The empowerment of Indra's body is a well-attested Ṛgvedic motif. The strengthening process is signaled with the verbs √*vṛdh* and √*ukṣ/vakṣ*, which both denote "to grow, increase; be/make great, strong; to strengthen, empower". Like the verb √*śū*, these two verbs signify an increase in size and/or strength.[44] For example, a poet from the oldest layer succinctly states of Indra:

> ṚV.6.24.7cd: *vṛddhásya cid vardhatām asya tanū́ stómebhir ukthaíś ca śasyámānā.*
>
> "Let the body of this one, though already strengthened/grown, grow stronger/bigger as it is being lauded with praises and hymns."

A poet from the middle layer makes a similar statement with regard to Indra's body:

> ṚV.3.34.1cd: *bráhmajūtas tanvà vāvṛdhānó bhū́ridātra ā́pṛṇad ródasī ubhé.*
>
> "Sped by sacred formulations, grown strong/big in body, of abundant gifts, he filled both world halves."

A book 9 poet evokes the same image:

> ṚV.9.73.2cd: *mádhor dhārābhir janáyanto arkám ít priyā́m índrasya tanvàm avīvṛdhan.*
> "Birthing a chant with streams of honey, they have caused Indra's beloved body to grow strong/in size."[45]

These examples highlight the way in which poet-priests constitute and empower their war god's body through ritual performances. This process obviously instills in the war god all the power he needs to win battles[46] and enables him to claim outright terrestrial and cosmic supremacy:

> ṚV.8.88.5: *prá hí ririkṣá ójasā divó ántebhyas pári, ná tvā vivyāca rája indra pā́rthivam ánu svadhā́ṃ vavakṣitha.*
>
> "Indeed, you project beyond the ends of heaven due to [your] power. The earthly realm did not encompass you, O Indra; you have been empowered in accordance with [your] independence."

Kiehnle (1979: 37–38) noted that the verb √*ukṣ/vakṣ* conveys martial and political connotations, especially in relation to Indra's cosmic independence or sovereignty.[47] These examples also suggest that Indra's ritualized empowerment is absolutely necessary—without it he could not fully become the war god and could not rule the universe or protect the tribes. Therefore, in ritually strengthening Indra, ritual practitioners instill in their war god physical power and also political authority and the legitimation to dominate others. At the same time, they display their own authority over the cosmos because they control the means, or at least the man, to conquer it.

These examples also foreground one of the two ritualized ways in which Indra receives his strength; namely, through ritual praise (*stóma*)—the other, *sóma*, will be discussed shortly. Consider a poet from the middle layer, one Vatsa Kāṇva, who explicitly draws attention to his role in this process when he names himself:

> ṚV.8.6.1: *mahắṁ índro yá ójasā parjányo vṛṣṭimắṁ iva, stómair vatsásya vāvṛdhe.*
>
> "Indra, who is great due to [his] power, like rain-bringing Parjanya, has been strengthened with Vatsa's praises."

Another poet from the same book underscores the importance of ritual praise:

> ṚV.8.12.4: *imáṃ stómam abhíṣṭaye ghṛtáṃ ná pūtám adrivaḥ, yénā nú sadyá ójasā vavákṣitha.*
>
> "This praise is for [your] superiority, purified like ghee, O stone wielder, through which now you have been empowered with power on this day."[48]

At the end of his hymn, the same poet states that his fellow ritual participants call on Indra so that he will manifest his power to defeat Vṛtra:

> ṚV.8.12.22-23: *índraṃ vṛtrắya hántave devắso dadhire puráḥ, índraṃ vắṇīr anūṣatā sám ójase. mahắntam mahinắ vayáṃ stómebhir havanaśrútam, arkaír abhí prá ṇonumaḥ sám ójase.*
>
> "In order to smash Vṛtra, the gods established Indra in front. Voices have cried out in unison to Indra for [his] power. We have repeatedly cried out in unison to the great one due to [his] greatness, to him who has heard [our] invocation through praises and through chants, for (his) power."

In a similar vein, Indra's loyal warrior band acts in a priestly manner and ritually strengthens him:

> ṚV.3.32.3: *yé te śúṣmaṃ yé táviṣīm ávardhann árcanta indra marútas ta ójaḥ, mā́dhyaṃdine sávane vajrahasta píbā rudrébhiḥ ságanaḥ suśipra.*
>
> "These are the ones who strengthened your ferocity and vigor, O Indra: The Maruts are chanting to your power. O mace wielder, drink at the midday pressing in company of the warrior band with the Rudras [Maruts], O well-mustached one."[49]

As we can see, poet-priests assert that their ritual discourse is both empowered and empowering. Ṛgvedic ritual poetry may be aesthetically pleasing, but poets repeatedly underscore its pragmatic nature to empower Indra, among other gods, while encouraging his violent activity.[50] Consequently, ritualists are adamant that power in ancient India does not exist apart from the ritualized performance of that power. The point here is that anyone seeking Indra's protection or seeking to place their positions as rulers under his auspices needs fundamentally an empowered war god and that empowerment cannot happen without poet-priests to sing the appropriate ritual praises (*stóma-*). Ritual practitioners thus make their ritual discourse indispensable for Indra's physical well-being and also the wider community because, without his verbal invigoration, an enervated war god could not protect or benefit anyone. We can even surmise that poets benefit from strengthening their war god because it legitimizes and reproduces their own ritual positions in early Vedic society. It is clearly in the best interest of Ṛgvedic poet-priests to reproduce this ideology. Ritual praise is not, however, the only process that strengthens Indra. The state of the war god's strength also depends on one of the most important and prestigious acts of ritual legitimization within early Vedic culture; that is, drinking *sóma*.

Drinking *Sóma*, Drinking Strength

It should be evident by now that the central focus of Ṛgvedic ritual performances is the preparation of *sóma* for Indra, among other gods and humans. Poets repeatedly assert that imbibing *sóma* causes the drinker to increase in size and strength,[51] and, in Indra's case, the process of ritual empowerment is literalized. The most explicit and succinct example of this ritual process comes from a late poet from the final layer of the text:

> ṚV.10.116.1: *píbā sómam mahatá indriyā́ya píbā vṛtrā́ya hántave śaviṣṭha, píba rāyé śávase hūyámānaḥ píba mádhvas tṛpád indrā́ vṛṣasva.*

> "Drink *sóma* for great Indriyan power [*indriyá*]. Drink to smash Vṛtra, O mightiest one. Being invoked, [you should] drink for wealth, for might [*śávas*]. Drink of the honey to satisfaction: O Indra, let [*sóma*] rain into yourself."

While the term *ójas* is absent, the terms *indriyá* and *śávas* are synonyms.[52] Other poets certainly state that Indra acquires *ójas* from drinking *sóma*—one poet even calls the substance the "best giver of power" (*ojodátama-*).[53] Consider several other examples:

> ṚV.8.76.10: *uttíṣṭhann ójasā sahá pītví śípre avepayaḥ, sómam indra camū́ sutám.*
>
> "Standing up in conjunction with power, you made [your] two lips tremble after drinking the pressed *sóma* in the Camū-cup, O Indra."
>
> ṚV.9.97.41: *mahát tát sómo mahiṣáś cakārāpā́ṃ yád gárbhó 'vṛṇīta devā́n, ádadhād índre pávamāna ójo 'janayat sū́rye jyótir índuḥ.*
>
> "The great buffalo, Soma, did a great thing when as embryo of the waters he chose the gods. Being purified, he established power in Indra. The droplet produced the light in the sun."

Just as offering ritual praise (*stóma*) instills power into Indra, so does drinking *sóma*. And this new infusion of power allows Indra to dominate rivals. To highlight this, at ṚV.2.22.1, Indra satiates himself on *sóma*, which exhilarates him so that he can perform a great deed (*máhi kárma kártave*). The poet continues:

> ṚV.2.22.2a-d: *ádha tvíṣīmāṁ abhy ójasā krívim yudhā́bhavad ā́ ródasī apṛṇad asya majmánā prá vāvṛdhe.*
>
> "Then being fiery, he became superior to the Krivi snake [Vṛtra] in battle through [his] power. He filled both worlds with his greatness and grew strong."[54]

Several other poets articulate the underlying martial and political ideology pertaining to *sóma*, as it makes Indra the warrior that he is, empowers him for battle, and provides him with all the raw strength he needs to conquer the universe and claim political supremacy:

> ṚV.1.9.1: *índréhi mátsy ándhaso víśvebhiḥ somapárvabhiḥ, mahā́ṁ abhiṣṭír ójasā.*

"O Indra, come! Take exhilaration from the plant with all its knots of *sóma*: Your superiority is great due to [your] power."

ṚV.1.55.2: *só arṇavó ná nadyàḥ samudríyaḥ práti gṛbhṇāti víśritā várīmabhiḥ, índraḥ sómasya pītáye vṛṣāyate sanāt sá yudhmá ójasā panasyate.*

"Just as the ocean's waves [engulf] the rivers, he engulfs the distributed [*sóma* juices] in their widths. Indra acts as a bull at the drinking of *sóma*. From of old, this fighter is admired due to [his] power."[55]

ṚV.8.33.7cd-8: *ayáṃ yáḥ púro vibhinátty ójasā mandānáḥ śipry ándhasaḥ. dānā́ mṛgó ná vāraṇáḥ purutrā́ caráthaṃ dadhe, nákiṣ ṭvā ní yamad ā́ suté gamo mahā́ṃś carasy ójasā.*

"This is the one who splits apart the forts with [his] power, the mustached one becoming exhilarated from the plant. Through this gift, he established his activity in many places, like a wild elephant. None will hold you down. You will come here to the pressed [*sóma* offering]. Being great, you roam about due to [your] power."

ṚV.8.92.6: *asyá pītvā́ mádānāṃ devó devásyaújasā, víśvābhí bhúvanā bhuvat.*

"Having drunk of this one, of the exhilarating drinks, a god [Indra, having drunk] of a god [Soma] with power will take supremacy throughout all the living worlds."[56]

These examples indicate that across all layers of the text, poets reinforce a close if not intrinsic relationship between drinking *sóma*, becoming physically strong, and assuming a position of political authority. However, before we can examine in more depth the construction of certain ritual and political relationships that define the status of those who prepare and drink *sóma* and how the concoction affects them, we need to consider the way in which this ritual act also plays a direct role in shaping the identities of men.

Drinking Manhood

Āryan men most certainly invest themselves in the cult of *sóma*. In numerous cases, men press and purify *sóma* for Indra to drink. In some of the more animated depictions of its preparation, they are also said to hold, restrain, and lead the divine draught.[57] Throughout all the chapters, we have seen various ritual strategies that poets employ to define the dominant form of masculinity and the overlapping ways in which it can be expressed. Given the central place of

sóma in Ṛgvedic ritual ideology and practice, it is not surprising that poets are also forthright about the role this concoction plays in constructing a masculine identity. The family patriarch of book 2, Gṛtsamada, succinctly states that drinking *sóma* shapes Indra's manliness and powerful physique:

> ṚV.2.36.5: *eṣá syá te tanvò nṛmṇavárdhanaḥ sáha ójaḥ pradívi bāhvór hitáḥ, túbhyaṃ sutó maghavan túbhyam ā́bhṛtas tvám asya brā́hmaṇād ā́ tṛpát piba.*
>
> "This [*sóma*] strengthens your body's manhood. As dominating strength, as power, it was established in your arms in distant days. For you it was pressed, O munificent one, and for you it was brought here: Drink of it from the Brahman's cup until satiated."[58]

As we have already seen, the body (*tanū́*) and especially the arms (*bāhú-*) are the most natural site of strength and other masculine traits, yet it is through ritual discourse and the ingestion of *sóma* that poets control a key way in which specific masculine and physical ideals are encoded in the body. Another family book poet succinctly captures this ritualized strategy and masculine ideal in the following line to Indra:

> ṚV.3.32.5b: *píbā sómaṃ śáśvate vīryā̀ya.*
>
> "Drink *sóma* for everlasting manliness."[59]

The ritual act of drinking *sóma* thus increases the strength and also manliness of its drinker, in particular Indra. For this reason, poets link it closely with a man's embodied sense of himself and his manly responsibilities. This is apparent in other examples as Indra drinks *sóma* and displays (√*diś*) his masculinity (*paúṃsya*),[60] and Soma rushes into a cattle raid to perform manly acts (*nṛmṇá-*).[61] In one case, Indra even drinks *sóma* to prove that he is a man:

> ṚV.8.2.23: *jyéṣṭhena sotar índrāya sómaṃ vīrā́ya śakrā́ya, bhárā píban náryāya.*
>
> "With the most excellent [drink, or power], O presser, bring *sóma* to Indra, to the capable brave man. He will drink to be manly."[62]

Several stanzas later, the same poet even states that *sóma* is a warrior's drink as it is "for the brave man, the champion" (ṚV.8.2.25c: *sómaṃ vīrā́ya śū́rāya*). While this line is directed toward Indra, other poets state that human males gain strength and manhood in the same ritualized way that their war god does. For example:

> ṚV.1.43.7: *asmé soma śríyam ádhi ní dhehi śatásya nṛ́ṇā́m, máhi śrávas tuvinṛ́mṇam.*
>
> "O Soma, place down on us the excellence of a hundred men, great fame, potent manhood."[63]

The juxtaposition of these all-important androcentric qualities highlights the social currency of drinking *sóma*, while indicating that ritual participants affirm their manliness and reputation through this ritual act. It is therefore equally true that men are able to prove their manhood by partaking of *sóma*.

Of course, this act benefits not only warriors, but also ritualists who define themselves as warriors, since Indra makes a *vīrá* powerful when he prepares *sóma* for his war god:

> ṚV.7.32.6: *sá vīró ápratiṣkuta índreṇa śūśuve nṛ́bhiḥ, yás te gabhīrā́ sávanāni vṛtrahan sunóty ā́ ca dhā́vati.*
>
> "This brave man, who cannot be driven back, is swollen by Indra, by men, [the brave man] who presses and strains deep pressings for you, O Vṛtra smasher."

While it is impossible to tell whether the brave man here is merely ritualizing his toughness or actually preparing himself for battle, or both, drinking *sóma* above all else strengthens Indra and human warriors for their martial excursions, while also verifying their warlike hypermasculine identities. One poet even personifies the ritually created drink as a brave man who helps his own warriors be victorious:

> ṚV.9.35.3ab: *tváyā vīréṇa vīravo 'bhí ṣyāma pṛtanyatáḥ.*
>
> "With you [Soma] as a brave man, O possessor of brave men, may we overcome those who engage in battle."[64]

If the gods are anything to go by, success in cattle raids and warfare provides warriors with the legitimation to drink *sóma* in the first place.[65]

We can also see the prescriptive way in which ritual practitioners reinforce the necessity of *sóma* in the lives of Āryan men. A late poet states that without the support of Indra, his priestly alter ego Bṛhaspati, and *sóma*, human warriors would be in danger:

> ṚV.1.18.4-5: *sá ghā vīró ná riṣyati yám índro bráhmaṇas pátiḥ, sómo hinóti mártyam. tváṃ tám brahmaṇas pate sóma índraś ca mártyam, dákṣiṇā pātv áṃhasaḥ.*

> "This brave man is not harmed, whom Indra, [whom] the lord of the sacred formulation, [whom] *sóma* urges on, [though] mortal. The mortal do you, O lord of the sacred formulation, and *sóma*, Indra, and the sacrificial fee protect from narrow straits."

Human warriors need Indra and *sóma*, and in partnering with their war god and partaking of the drink, they place their well-being and identities under the auspices of the gods who exemplify the masculine and martial ideals expected of them. Consequently, the representation of Indra's body not only reflects a deep-seated ideology pertaining to masculinity and violence; it also constructs it. This is especially evident when men receive ritual praise and partake of *sóma*. A man's identity cannot be fully realized unless he has access to *sóma* and ultimately participates in the Ṛgvedic ritual tradition. The message human warriors receive upon drinking *sóma* is that they should exercise their ritually induced, strong manly bodies in the same way Indra does. Indra's body, size, and strength thus represent an important metaphor for how men may have embodied menacing and hypermasculine identities; that is, to be like Indra is to be big, strong, intimidating, and violent. Ṛgvedic ritual rhetoric and practices produce and foster this hypermasculine violent attitude and self-image.[66] Hence, when men drink *sóma* they are able to affirm and display their masculine identities and martial commitments, yet in drinking they also give tacit approval to, if not embrace, the dominant androcentric ideology. *Sóma* functions as a concrete ritually distilled symbol of this ideology, and men are given little choice but to think of themselves as tough, powerful, and ultimately Indra-like when they partake of it.

Birthrights and Drinking Status

Let us return to the wider political implications involved in drinking. If *sóma* is made from an ephedrine-based plant (the juices of which are pressed out and ritually mixed with milk, honey, and ghee), then the metaphors and ideologies of empowerment could possibly be based in part on the stimulant effects of ephedra.[67] But the hypothetical pharmacological effects of *sóma* are secondary—if not irrelevant—to the ritual and political symbolism and ideology underlying its use. The primary issue here is a matter of representation, not of the effects of a drug-induced experience. Oberlies (1998) has convincingly demonstrated that the preparation and drinking of *sóma* involves notions of prosperity, fertility, and power relating directly to warriors and chieftains and, especially, the succession of sovereignty.[68] According to Oberlies (440), since Indra is the main recipient of *sóma*, then access to it signifies political power and

legitimizes rule. Furthermore, human rulers assume their political positions in the same way Indra is invested with his physical and political power; namely, through the ritualized act of drinking of *sóma*. If Indra's example is representative of human warriors and chieftains, as Oberlies believes it is, then the performance of Ṛgvedic *sóma* rituals serves to legitimize such men while also instilling in them martial, cosmic, and political status and duties. We have seen that Ṛgvedic poet-priests employ various discursive and performative strategies to ensure that Indra's example corresponds to the lives of real men, who seek ritually to substantiate their masculine identities and political positions in the image of their war god. In this regard, as a ritually created substance, *sóma* plays a fundamental role in fusing divine and human realms in Ṛgvedic ritual performances and (literally) in a man's body, and in mapping Indra's identity and exploits onto the idealized image of Āryan men, especially warriors and chieftains.

What we will now see is that through the strengthening process Ṛgvedic poet-priests are able to reinforce this ritualized relationship while embedding the ideals associated with *sóma* in a more complex and subtle network of practices as a man's right to drink is defined at birth. First, if Indra's power depends on *sóma* and *stóma*, this is tantamount to saying that the kingly war god cannot achieve his martial and political status without ritual performances, and this is equally true for men as they also affirm their masculinity, physical prowess, and fitness for rulership by drinking *sóma*. We need then to consider the examples where ritual practitioners assert that in Indra's case, the strengthening process is undertaken at the moment of his birth. For example:

> ṚV.3.32.9: *ádrogha satyáṃ táva tán mahitváṃ sadyó yáj jātó ápibo ha sómam, ná dyā́va indra tavásas ta ójo nā́hā ná mā́sāḥ śarádo varanta*.
>
> "O you who lack any falsehood, real is your greatness, in that as soon as born you drank *sóma*. O Indra, neither the daytimes, nor the days, months, nor autumnal years will obstruct the power of you who are energetic."

The first thing the newborn war god must do to achieve his full martial and political potential is drink *sóma*. We recall that poet-priests play an active role in birthing Indra through ritual once they have summoned him. A poet from the middle layer even states that ritual practitioners (or perhaps the gods) generate and empower Indra so that he will dominate everyone and everything:

ṚV.8.97.10: *víśvāḥ pr̥tanā abhibhūtaraṃ náraṃ sajūs tatakṣur índraṃ jajanúś ca rājáse, krátvā váriṣṭhaṃ vára āmúrim utógrám ójiṣṭhaṃ tavásaṃ tarasvínam.*

"They have jointly fashioned and begotten for ruling the man, Indra, who reigns supreme in all battles; choicest at the choice due to [his] resolve, and a hindrance, powerful, most powerful, energetic, persevering."[69]

In the introduction, we saw that chieftains (*rā́jan-*), whether divine or human, assume their positions of rulership during specific periods; this is especially true of Varuṇa in times of settled peace (*kṣéma*) and Indra in times of migration and war (*yóga*). Indra's birth most likely signifies the yearly ritual process whereby ritual participants summon the war god first to set the universe in order by destroying the threat of Vr̥tra, freeing the life-giving waters, and restoring the sun in the sky; and second ritual participants summon the war god to watch over their impending migration (or perhaps to aid them in a more immediate concern, such as a planned cattle raid or battle). Indra, of course, has an original mythic birth "from of old" (*sanát*),[70] so his annual entry into the human world through ritual performance is both a reenactment of mythic events and a rebirth of sorts. This birth appears to take place on the first day of the New Year—perhaps around the spring equinox—which itself represents the rebirth of the cosmos from the long season of wintry darkness, drought, and chaos (see Kuiper 1960: 234–242). Ṛgvedic ritualists work hard to empower the war god and secure his partnership as soon as he is born, and their success depends on the strength of their liturgical hymns and their preparation of *sóma*. Without a strong war god, the tribes and the universe are in danger from the negative forces of disorder and the crushing effects of an eternal winter. The image of Indra's birth thus underscores the patriarchal and cosmic dominance of Ṛgvedic poet-priests, since they control the ritual means to nurture and deploy the babe-at-arms.[71] It also underscores the way in which ritualists play an active role in the destruction of Vr̥tra's constricting power and in the annual regeneration and restoration of the cosmos from the threat of an eternal night at year's end.

This all begs the question: In what way, if any, does the image of Indra's birth correspond to men who take on their war god's responsibilities? In chapter 2, we recall that Āryan men, especially the sacrificer and chieftain, may also undergo their own form of ritual rebirth, and this may correspond to the image of Indra's entry into the human world. If sacrificers, and particularly chieftains, become human representatives and embodiments of Indra, then the war god may be born in the world through them.[72] We can certainly see the way in

which poets intertwine the metaphors of birthing, masculinity, and ritual participation. In one case, men ritually seek the birth of a brave man (*vīrá*) who is active (*karmaṇyà*) in ritual and devoted to the gods.[73] It is noteworthy that elsewhere *sóma* "gives" an active brave man (*karmaṇyà vīrá*), who is portrayed as ritually and socially privileged.[74] Likewise, Adhvaryu priests offer *sóma* to the god Vāyu ("Wind") so that he will provide brave men (*vīrayā́*), and we note that anyone born to his worshipper will be a "prizewinner" (*vājín*) in battle.[75] In these examples, the speakers may be expressing a desire for fit sons, yet such individuals are nevertheless depicted as full-grown, ritually committed warriors. This may mean that we are actually dealing with some form of symbolic ritual birth from drinking *sóma*.[76] In this vein, Soma, or perhaps a man, is said to be born as a sage (*kaví*) with ritual aptitude and intellect.[77] The god Mitra is born as a chieftain (*rā́jan*) and ritual expert (*vedhás*),[78] and we note elsewhere that a *rā́jan* is praised as a ritual expert (*vedhás*).[79] Finally, Agni overcomes the darkness as "he is being born like a chieftain" (ṚV.6.9.1c: *jā́yamāno ná rā́jā-*). The image of Agni's birth, common in the *Ṛgveda*, metaphorically signals the kindling of the ritual Fire and the moment that ritualists manifest the god in ritual and in the world of men. As such, it may be the basis for the image of Indra's birth and that of poet-priests, warriors, and chieftains in ritual. More important, while such births may refer to new life, in these cases they appear to signify the ritual participation of "newborn" men, whether divine or human. These examples suggest that ritual participation is considered to be a form of rebirth. According to Oberlies (1998: 421), this image corresponds to the rebirth of the cosmos and the political order on the first day of the New Year, the day of the performance of a *sóma* ritual. We recall that the poet of the Puruṣasūkta hymn deals with this exact issue in a reformulated way as the social position of men is defined by their birth from the ritual dismemberment of a cosmic man's body. In this case, the social and political standing of all men is subject to and produced by a violent ritual birth. Consequently, the Ṛgvedic idiom "to be born" appears to represent one of the ways that poet-priests metaphorically circumscribe and legitimize the ritual participation, masculine identities, and political positions of men, especially warriors and chieftains, as their social standing depends on being ritually reborn. Moreover, poet-priests fuse ritual, political, and cosmological ideals in the bodies of men, who like the universe and the gods, are born again through the yearly performance of *sóma* rituals. This may also represent, albeit speculatively, the basis of later, more systematic classical Vedic rituals wherein the sacrificer and chieftain are seasonally regenerated and reborn in the *dīkṣā* and *rājasūya* rites, respectively (the latter literally meaning "the generation of the king").[80] And indeed all Āryan men belonging to the highest three classes will explicitly become "twice-born"

(*dvijā*) after their initiation ceremony (*upanayana*) into studentship and adulthood.

The image of Indra's birth thus underscores the expectations placed on human men, who, like their war god, undergo a ritual rebirth when they drink *sóma* and receive ritual praise. Their birth into the world however comes with a heavy expectation as they should battle enemies, capture the spoils of war, and claim outright supremacy. An Āryan man's symbolic birth is steeped in an ideology of violence and political domination over clans, tribes, the natural world, and the cosmos.[81] The family patriarch of book 2, Gṛtsamada, appears to articulate this ritualized ideology:

> ṚV.2.22.3: *sākáṃ jātáḥ krátunā sākám ójasā vavakṣitha sākáṃ vṛddhó vīryaìḥ sāsahír mṛ́dho vícarṣaṇiḥ, dā́tā rā́dha stuvaté kā́myaṃ vásu saínaṃ saścad devó devā́ṃ satyám índraṃ satyá índuḥ.*
>
> "As soon as born you were empowered at once with resolve, at once with power; at once strengthened with manly qualities: Keeping the boundary people apart, you repeatedly dominated the negligent ones. [You are] the giver of benefit and desirable treasure to the praiser: one accompanies the other—god upon god, the real droplet [of *sóma*] upon the real Indra."

The poet states that, as soon as born, Indra is strengthened (√*ukṣ/vakṣ*; √*vṛdh*) with resolve (*krátu*), power (*ójas*), and his manly faculties (*vīryà-*) to wage war, yet of course the war god is expected to reciprocate by providing his worshipper with plunder. Gṛtsamada also seems to declare that he has successfully summoned Indra with the "real" *sóma* given to the "real Indra" (*satyám índraṃ satyá índuḥ*; repeated at ṚV.2.22.1h, 2g, 3g). Recall that in the introduction, the sacrificer drinks *sóma* in conjunction with Indra and for this reason is called a "god sitting on the seat," and chieftain Trasadasyu is called a "half-god" when he drinks *sóma* and claims to be Indra.[82] It may be the case then that the "real Indra" in the above stanza is a reference to the god's human counterpart, who has just been born anew as the war god and with the deity's manly qualities and powers when he partakes of *sóma*.

Consider, then, the following stanza, which suggests that Indra's entry into the world is not a onetime occurrence as ritual practitioners give birth to, empower, and deploy Indra time and again, and we note their expectation for wealth won in battle:

> ṚV.8.99.3: *śrā́yanta iva sū́ryaṃ víśvéd índrasya bhakṣata, vásūni jāté jánamāna ójasā práti bhāgáṃ ná dīdhima.*

> "Like those who cook [share] the sun, they share all [treasures] of Indra. When the one who has been born before is being born [anew] with power, we anticipate [his] treasures, as if [our] portion."

The idea here may be that Indra has manifested himself once again in a new ritual performance, yet of course he cannot achieve his full physical potential without ritual offerings and praise. This may also correspond to human warriors and rulers, who should continually seek to increase their physical strength and all the more substantiate their political power by being born again in yearly ritual performances.

Therefore, since Indra is not born with all the power he needs to overcome enemies and conquer the universe, Ṛgvedic poet-priests—by necessity and by design—strengthen him through ritual practices, and especially by drinking *sóma*. This ideology also extends to human men, who need ritually produced strength, manliness, and dominance for battle and rulership. It is through *sóma* and *stóma* that ritual practitioners encode martial and political ideals in the body of Indra and in the bodies of all Āryan men. This violent androcentric ideology is all the more naturalized as men create and ingest *sóma* (whether it acted as a stimulant is another matter altogether since it is impossible to delineate a pharmacological effect from its ritual, social, and political symbolism). Moreover, since men undergo a form of symbolic rebirth, then their masculine identities are all the more in need of ritual nurturing and care. Ṛgvedic poet-priests thus use Indra's body to construct and define the nature of ritual, social, and political relationships, while negotiating and controlling those very realities. It is in the act of drinking *sóma* that ritual practitioners directly influence, if not control, individual bodies and political institutions.[83] Furthermore, in continually expressing political power by way of physical metaphors and reducing such power to the body, poet-priests make any direct claim for political authority contingent on physical invigoration from ritual substances and rhetoric, and on a ritually constructed understanding of the male body.

Conclusion

In drawing this chapter to a close, I want to present a five-stanza hymn from the final book of the *Ṛgveda* in which the poet brings together in an almost summary fashion many of the embodied masculine values and political ideals considered so far:

ṚV.10.153.1–5: *īṅkháyantīr apasyúva índraṃ jātám úpāsate, bhejānā́saḥ suvíryam. tvám indra bálād ádhi sáhaso jātá ójasaḥ, tváṃ vṛ́ṣan vṛ́ṣéd asi. tvám indrāsi vṛtrahā́ vy àntárikṣam atiraḥ, úd dyā́m astabhnā ójasā. tvám indra sajóṣasam arkám bibharṣi bāhvóḥ, vájraṃ śíśāna ójasā. tvám indrābhibhū́r asi víśvā jātā́ny ójasā, sá víśvā bhúva ā́bhavaḥ.*[84]

"Swaying industrious women sit near the [new]born Indra, taking a share of [his] man-power. O Indra, you were born from strength, from dominance, from power. O bull, you are surely a bull. O Indra, you are the smasher of Vṛtra, you have traversed the atmosphere and propped up heaven through [your] power. O Indra, you bear an agreeable chant on [your] arms, sharpening the mace with power. O Indra, you have supremacy over all born things due to [your] power. You pervaded all worlds."

In the first stanza, Indra is a newborn in possession of potent manliness or brave men (*suvírya*). The second stanza states that Indra's birth comes from physical power (*bála*, *sáhas*, *ójas*). In the third stanza, Indra creates the cosmos and destroys the primordial serpent Vṛtra. While *sóma* is missing from the hymn, in the fourth stanza, Indra embodies a chant on his arms (*bāhú-*), as if the placement of ritual praise on his body metonymically stands for ritual empowerment (note that Indra does powerfully sharpens his mace). In the last stanza, Indra's physical strength substantiates his political power over everyone who is born (*víśvā jātā́ni*, or "all generations") as the deity has absolute dominion. This late poet has thus deliberately created a hymn that encapsulates and emphasizes the core elements of Indra's embodied status and duties, while also subjecting all people to the war god's inborn power. It is as if the poet is trying to reinforce the importance of the strengthening process, and by extension solidify the centrality of Ṛgvedic rituals in early Vedic society and also his place in it.

To sum up: The process of strengthening Indra through *sóma* and *stóma* highlights the close, if not intrinsic connection between the discursive and functional nature of Ṛgvedic ritual performances and the symbolism and ideology of physical and political power. First and foremost, Indra's ritually produced strength and masculinity promotes his domination of cosmic and political realities and friend and foe alike. Ritual practitioners naturalize this ideology by mapping the symbolism of Indra's body onto the embodied identities of ritual participants, most closely those of warriors and chieftains. The ritualized control of bodily symbolism provides poet-priests with the authoritative means to construct men's identities. The poetic construction of the body through ritual practices and discursive formations (such as *stóma*, *sóma*, and

the gods) functions to regulate the bodies of men while producing appropriate ritualized bodies. Ritual practitioners thus wield ideological power over not only the gods, but also sacrificers, warriors, chieftains, and other poets, who all drink *sóma* and sing a ritualized ideology that would have constrained and shaped their identities and behavior. The ritualization of Indra's body and the bodies of Āryan men constitutes a set of embodied micropolitical relationships that ritual practitioners construct and share with all ritual participants.

Nevertheless, it is more than just the case that Indra's strength is embedded in a political ideology. In early Vedic ritual culture, strength is not just an aspect of political authority; physical power is political power, and vice versa. That is to say, Indra's political power, and by extension that of a human chieftain, does not come from a state or legal institution or apparatus; it comes from his body, and the virility and strength of his body is produced by ritual practitioners. Since Indra's body is the body politic in ancient India, the ritualized means to empower it constitute the means to control the political arena and individuals who move within it, or at least to participate in this realm with considerable power. It also means that through the symbolism of Indra's body, and especially the strengthening process, poet-priests are able to socialize Āryan men within the dominant masculine ideology, and, as we have repeatedly seen, ritual practitioners could themselves very well be warriors and chieftains. Furthermore, ritual practitioners benefit from preparing and strengthening their war god because doing so legitimizes and reproduces their own ritual positions, through which they receive protection and wealth. Indra's body is thus more than just a metaphoric representation of a man's self-image and how men should view and use their bodies; it is a site of struggle for masculinity, political power, economic well-being, and social status. The practices used in empowering Indra determine the social standing and financial well-being of poet-priests; they are paid for their services by Āryan men, and their position among men is enhanced because it is they who determine the status of warriors and chieftains who seek through ritual practices to display their identities in the image of the war god. It is for this reason that Ṛgvedic poet-priests invest themselves performatively and discursively in the strengthening process; their ritual practices are intrinsic to the success of Indra and the community at large. Their interest lies in empowering their war god because a strong Indra conquers the universe and enemies and legitimizes the reciprocal exchange of material and symbolic capital among poets, warriors, chieftains, and patrons. In short, ritual participants are invested in the process of empowering Indra because doing so empowers them.

The strengthening process thus attests the overlapping nature of individual, social, and political bodies in early Vedic culture, and also the way in

which poet-priests constitute and negotiate the ideologies of the Ṛgvedic body politic, especially encoded in Indra, to construct and communicate successfully the body image of all ritual participants for their own and communal ends. It is one thing to say that physical symbolism attributes to the social and political order naturalness and authority; it is another to recognize that power in ancient India does not exist apart from the ritualized performance and embodiment of that power and that the poetic and priestly traditions control the means of empowerment.

Finally, if we theorize the reasons behind the collection of Ṛgvedic hymns and the closing of the text, we should take into account the discursive ways in which poet-priests encode a dominant ideology relating to masculinity and violence as this ideology defines the reasons why such rituals were performed in the first place. The consistent appearance of androcentric martial and political ideals across the text suggests that Ṛgvedic poet-priests are deeply concerned with the production and reproduction of the importance of their rituals and ideologies in the lives of early Vedic Āryans. By making *sóma* and *stóma* intrinsic to the physical well-being, masculinity, and strength of Indra and, by extension, early Vedic men, poet-priests strategically reproduce the importance and centrality of their ritual performances by naturalizing ritual ideals within the bodies of men. Indra's body is thus the very means through which ritual practitioners legitimize the Ṛgvedic ritual tradition in the first place. The consistency of the *Ṛgveda* as a closed oral text demonstrates that poets actively fix or overdetermine the meaning of Ṛgvedic rituals to make sure that all ritual participants interpret the veracity and dominant meanings of the rites in the same way. Ritual practitioners do this by stressing the importance of a strong masculine war god, and this image also corresponds to human warriors and chieftains. This ensures that ritual performances are indispensable to Indra's physical well-being, and of course the well-being of martially and politically inclined men, because such practices provide men, whether divine or human, with much-needed strength and manliness. Poet-priests thus strategically justify their ritual performances based on the need for Indra's ritual empowerment. The fact that younger generations of poets underscore the importance of strengthening Indra indicates not only that the tradition is successful in reproducing a dominant ideology but also that the ritualized performance of that ideology reproduces the privileged positions of poet-priests, warriors, and chieftains. Therefore, while it is true that without ritual praise and *sóma* there would be no strong Indra and no strong men, it is equally true that poet-priests must continually reproduce the ideology that their war god and Āryan men need empowerment, or else there would be no need for their ritual tradition.

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Conclusion

While a sudden invasion theory is no longer accepted to explain the arrival of pre-Vedic and Vedic Āryans into the Indian subcontinent (ca. 2000–1200 BCE), the evidence presented in this work indicates that the Ṛgvedic tribes had a heavily ritualized martial ideology driving their migratory progress. The social and historical implications of the dominant masculine ideology would have been realized in Āryan migratory expansionism, in securing and maintaining natural resources, such as pastoral lands and waterways, and in the union or subjugation of competing Āryan and non-Āryan peoples. Ṛgvedic poet-priests clearly propagate a violent masculine ideology—a Ṛgvedic warrior ethic—wherein all males, whether young or old, become real men by participating in the ritual tradition and by being strong, tough, and dominant. Of course, ritual participants value generosity, protection, benevolence, and poetic knowledge, among other qualities. Nevertheless, we have seen that Ṛgvedic poets consistently project an image of themselves and their community that is shot through with notions of conflict and competition for resources. They celebrate bravery, toughness, and strength as core components of manhood and praise men when they have flexed their muscles poetically or physically in cattle-raiding expeditions and open warfare during seasonal migrations. If some men accepted Indra as their role model, then the war god's exploits and traits represent an important metaphor for how Āryan men should embody menacing and hypermasculine identities, and presumably they used their own bodies to front in powerful and

intimidating ways. The Ṛgvedic ritual tradition also links social standing with physical power, the threat—real or perceived—of violence, and the ability to intimidate and kill people, whether in a ritualized manner or for real. Like Indra, men's bodies are thus the very means through which they gain economic security, social prestige, and political status, and for this reason the *Ṛgveda* attests in part a ritualized cult of violence and is itself a martial text.

It is once again necessary to stress emphatically that the valorization and reproduction of this ideology relates primarily to the cult of Indra, Agni, and Soma during times of seasonal migration. Āryan men seem to be directly concerned with forming peaceful alliances and allaying conflict during times of settlement. It is noteworthy that the Ādityas, the gods who represent the ideals of peace and justice, are rarely associated with the masculine terminology. A man is valued for many qualities and roles, especially reciprocity and benevolence, and many of these are not in and of themselves violent. Furthermore, the consistent production of a dominant form of masculinity says more about the success of the Ṛgvedic ritual tradition and its ideals than it does about the lives and identities of all men in ancient India. As Connell (2005) points out, different and often conflicting masculinities exist in any given historical context, and as a result dominant expressions of masculinity constantly need to suppress alternatives. In early Vedic culture, the Ṛgvedic tradition certainly minimizes any tension in its conceptualization of male roles. To highlight its underlying consistency, I have identified only a single poet whose interpretation of masculinity could be construed as opposed to the dominant model, which places all things manly under the auspices of gods such as Indra; that is, when human men do masculine things they do them in the war god's wake. In the last book of the *Ṛgveda*, in a matter-of-fact way, a late poet appears to advocate the individuality of men when he suggests that the virile qualities or courageous acts of a man are unique, even among twins:

> ṚV.10.117.9: *samaú cid dhástau ná samáṃ viviṣṭaḥ sammātárā cin ná samáṃ duhāte, yamáyoś cin ná samā́ vīryàṇi jñātí cit sántau ná samám pṛṇītaḥ.*
>
> "Even both hands that are the same, their labor is not the same. Even two similar [cow] mothers give milk that is not the same. Even the manly acts [or qualities; *vīrya-*] of twins are not the same. Even two who are blood relations do not fulfill the same."

While it is difficult to know the exact implications of this late stanza, the poet states that the manly traits and acts of individual men are theirs and theirs alone. This could possibly be a critique of the dominant ideology that all men

should live up to Indra's example by embodying and mimicking the god's masculinity. If this is the case, then this poet appears to be expressing some tension or dismay toward the dominant ideology by presenting an unorthodox assessment of masculinity.

This raises a larger problem as we have little or no way of knowing how representative the *Ṛgveda* is of all peoples living in ancient India, nor how inclusive or exclusive was membership within the cult of *sóma* (see Whitaker 2007). Moreover, even within this tradition it is reasonable to posit that few men probably matched the paradigmatic model or displayed the toughness or independence of Indra and other gods, and that not all Āryan men would have been interested in ritual participation, warfare, or Indra's mythic exploits. What this means is that the androcentric ideals and practices put forward in the *Ṛgveda* most likely correspond only to the actual personalities and lived experiences of a small number of men. However, the majority of men moving within the wider Vedic cultural milieu most likely benefited from the patriarchal, political, and economic rewards entailed by the dominant ideology. That is to say, Āryan men most likely gained the benefits of patriarchy in terms of honor, prestige, the right to command, the right to participate in rituals, and the right to own and accumulate material wealth, especially in the form of other males and livestock. This suggests that most Āryan men had little reason to critique the ritual tradition, given the direct or indirect advantages derived from its performance. Hence, while masculinity in early Vedic culture should not be thought of as monolithic, nor representative of all men living in ancient India, what the *Ṛgveda* indicates is that its proponents cogently construct and reproduce a dominant androcentric ideology for various social, economic, and political ends, and these ends are intrinsically embedded in a ritually defined network of social practices and relationships.

In light of this, it is necessary to address briefly Jan Heesterman's (1985, 1993) theory about the development of Vedic ritual traditions. He argues that a controlled and safe ritual replaced an original, yet hypothetical, violent warrior sacrifice that was the arena of conflict and alliance in which honor and status were contended, and where a consecrated warrior patron (*dīkṣita*) bestowed gifts on guests and took stock of his raids. According to Heesterman, the central problem of the ritual tradition was the resolution of killing and violence. As a result, the sacrifice was at once the place of generosity and munificence and of death and destruction. It may have originally been a battleground where fire, provisions, and cattle were fought over. It was only through the intervention of specialized priests, who ordered and controlled the sacrifice, that the tension between patron and guests was pacified. Priestly involvement further allowed for any reciprocal exchange to be peacefully mediated. The priests thus created

an anodyne and safe ritual from a once ambivalent and violent warrior sacrifice (although Heesterman does recognize that the two roles of warrior and priest were originally not mutually exclusive).

Several problems are immediately apparent with Heesterman's argument. First, and most damning, he did not consult the *Ṛgveda*, the most obvious and oldest source. He relied rather on the later ritual manuals (*Brāhmaṇas*, *Sūtras*) to construct his theory, and then he erroneously projected it back into an imaginary and unattested prehistory (cf. Jamison 1996a). Second, as far as I can tell, the *Ṛgveda* attests very little or no threat of internal violence (cf. Falk 1997: 70). To be precise, I have not encountered a poet who suggests that within the confines of his immediate ritual performance, a human warrior or chieftain intends to injure or kill him or another ritual participant. Poets definitely talk about verbal competitions (*vívāc*), especially in summoning Indra, yet it is unclear whether these are between the ritual performances of rival groups (see Kuiper 1960: 264–274).[1] It may be the case that poet-priests had to prove their ritual ability in summoning Indra in the face of potential rivals. However, even in these cases poets do not talk about personally killing each other. On the contrary, they state that Indra will reject or destroy those who oppose him in his endeavors or those whose speech is disrespectful or impotent.[2] Poets certainly threaten men with insult and injury if they fail to live up to their ritual and martial expectations, and they state that Indra will destroy enemies if they impede the outcomes of ritual performances or obstruct the interests of the tribe. Nevertheless, the former reprimands work to admonish inappropriate behavior of men who wish to participate in the tradition; and the latter death threats are directed at individuals who are external to the poets' immediate group. The many voices within the *Ṛgveda* thus present us with a unified front whereby men are socialized within a masculine martial ideology and a ritualized economy, yet they consistently project violence outward to other communities and tribes, whether Āryan or not. And since the ritual ground appears to be the dominant arena in which prestige and status are recognized and in which masculine identities, roles, and obligations are communicated and legitimized, the text strongly suggests that warriors and chieftains *willingly* participate in the ritual tradition, and in many cases it is quite possible that these men are poet-priests themselves. It would be surprising if they did not make sure their rituals run smoothly with little or no interference and as much felicity as possible. Therefore, the evidence for the Ṛgvedic *sóma* cult does not suggest that tribal members, especially warriors or chieftains, sought to disrupt the ritual in any way, simply because it is such an important medium in which their egos are stroked and their social positions are confirmed. Indeed, the Ṛgvedic tradition provides respect, status, and financial gain, while also

fostering group cohesion and direction. If anything constrains, controls, and directs the behavior of Āryan men, and if anything promotes Āryan migratory expansionism, it is the Ṛgvedic ritual tradition. In saying this, I do not wish to suggest that we will not find any tension among ritual performers. The point here is that the dominant androcentric ideology most definitely normalizes violence, yet it is consistently directed toward Āryan and non-Āryan men alike who stand outside the poets' immediate family, clan, or tribe. Early Vedic rituals do not alleviate tension or violence; they serve to promote, justify, and direct it outside of the tribe for strategically determined goals.

The evidence presented in this book has thus demonstrated that Ṛgvedic poet-priests actively construct and deploy a dominant form of masculinity that legitimizes their ritual tradition and their place in it, while also defining the interests, dispositions, practices, and relationships of all its members. Ritual practitioners promote different masculine roles—poet, priest, patron, sacrificer, warrior, champion, and chieftain, to name a few—yet they also ensure that all these roles are subject to the tenets of a dominant ideology principally represented by and encoded through the three masculine gods Indra, Agni, and Soma. This ideology demands that all men within the tribe participate in *sóma* rituals—whether they did is another matter—and expects that they will accept Ṛgvedic social, economic, and political ideals, relationships, and practices as normative. Consequently, it is in *sóma* rituals that Āryan men performatively represent and glorify an idealized image of themselves and their society. However, it is more than a case of mere self-representation as Ṛgvedic ritual practices have real consequences and ramifications in a lived world outside of the ritual arena—this is at least what we are repeatedly told. This suggests that Ṛgvedic masculinity is hegemonic not only because it predominates in the text, but also because it is successfully embedded in the lives, expectations, status, and survival of real humans. It is easy to see that much of the martial tension and political conflict in early Vedic society comes not only from the realities of surviving in a harsh and uncertain world, but also from the mythologized ideals and ritualized practices that poet-priests promulgate in their ritual performances and inextricably connect with being male.

The way in which Āryan men construct and encode their masculine ideology may also give us some tentative insights into a few of the reasons behind the closing of the *Ṛgveda*. As we have repeatedly seen, Ṛgvedic ritualists invest time and energy in transmitting an androcentric martial ideology across all layers of the text. Moreover, they work hard to ensure that their rituals are the only means through which aspiring rulers can summon Indra and create an appearance of inexhaustible potency, strength, and political supremacy. According to Witzel (1997b), the sovereign rulers of the Kuru supertribe rise

to power and prominence at the end of the early Vedic period, and these men instigate the final collection of Ṛgvedic hymns and their codification in a closed oral text. They also undertake a systematic reformulation of ritual practices attested in the development of *śrauta* rites. The Kuru chieftains may have been interested in patronizing poet-priests and canonizing hymns that underscored their hypermasculine ideals, expectations, and gods. They may also have accepted the dominant ideology because it legitimized their own masculine identities and political authority. Hence, the dominant masculine ideology may very well have been one of the major contributing factors that determined which hymns were included in the *Ṛgveda*.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. For early Vedic history and culture, see Allchin et al. 1995; Erdosy 1995; Falk 1997; and Witzel 1989, 1995a, 1995b, 1997a, 1997b.

2. The term *árya* perhaps means "civilized, cultured" and signals a specific linguistic, cultural, and even ethnic identity (see Deshpande 1995: 80). See Rothermund 1986, Pollock 1993, and King 1999: 85 for consideration of the relationship between late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century orientalist scholarship and German nationalism, which embraced notions of a pure Indo-European Āryan race for various political and ideological reasons. For wider considerations of the modern and often controversial interpretations of Indo-European history in general and early Indian history in particular, see Bryant 2001, Witzel 2001, and Bryant and Patton 2005.

3. Watkins (2000: 101) states:

> Proto-Indo-European was not limited to just one word for "man, male person": several Indo-European roots have furnished words for this concept in the daughter languages. The root man-[1], appearing in English *man* for instance, was apparently a fairly neutral, all-purpose term. The reconstructed word wĭ-ro-, a derivative of the root weiə- "be vigorous," was used especially for men in their capacity as warriors or as slaves. (Slaves were often captured warriors.) In Sanskrit, for example, *vīraḥ* means "man, hero" but is also paired with the word *paśu*, "cattle," to refer to two-footed property (slaves), as in the compound *vīrapśa-*, "(abundance of) men and cattle." . . . In Italic languages, too, Latin *vir* "man" and its relatives can appear as a type of property, such as

the Latin phrase *pecudēsque virōsque* "cattle and men." There is also the word ner-[2], "man," which embodied the notion of strength. This is the source of Greek *anēr, andr-*, "man," as well as various Italic words meaning "magistrate"; it also underlies the name of the Roman emperor *Nerō*.

4. See Deshpande 1995 and Proferes 2007.

5. For recent consideration of the terms *ā́rya*, *dā́sa*, and *dā́syu*, see Whitaker 2007.

6. For assessments of Vedic martiality and politics, see Schlerath 1960; Thapar 1984; Heesterman 1985, 1993; Hoek, Kolff, and Oort 1992; and Oberlies 1998.

7. I also concur with Jankowski's definition of ideology as an organizational resource for groups that involves "a logically connected set of beliefs that provide the members with (1) a picture of the world, (2) an interpretation of the picture, and (3) a justification for its superiority over other pictures. Ideology serves two interconnected functions. . .. First, it attempts to explain how the world functions on a broad societal level; second, it creates a set of moral principles that will solidify the group" (1991: 84).

8. Cf. Carrigan, Connell, and Lee 1985: 592–594.

9. See Oldenberg 1982 [1888]; Gonda 1975; Witzel 1995a, 1995b; and Deshpande 1995.

10. In his 1999 essay "Substrate Languages in Old Indo-Aryan" (3), Witzel proposes the following stratification: I. Early Ṛgvedic period (ca. 1700–1500 BCE): books 4, 5, 6, and maybe book 2 (though he moves this to the middle layer later; see Witzel 2001: 21). This layers contains early hymns that refer to the Yadu-Turvaśa, Anu-Druhyu tribes; II. Middle (main) Ṛgvedic period (ca. 1500–1350 BCE): books 3, 7, 8. 1–66 and 1.51–191. This layer focuses on the Bharata chieftain Sudās, his ancestors, and rivals, notably Trasadasyu (of the closely related Pūru tribe); III. Late Ṛgvedic period (ca. 1350–1200 BCE): books 1.1–50, 8.67–103, 10.1–84, 10.85–191. This layer includes Kuruśravaṇa, a descendant of the Pūru chieftain Trasadasyu, and the emergence of the Kuru super-tribe (under post-ṚV. Parikṣit). Witzel (2001: 21) simplifies this model wherein 4–6 are old; 2, 3, 7, and 8 represent a middle layer; and 1 and 10 are late. For the most part, I will follow this simplified model throughout the book.

11. Proferes 2003: 11–16.

12. For an excellent summary of Ṛgvedic *sóma* rituals and the politics of early Vedic culture, see Proferes 2007: 1–22.

13. See Kuiper 1960, 1983; Schmidt 1968; Falk 1997: 80–83, 86–88; and Witzel 2009: 772–774.

14. It is important to note that some poets conflate these myths. See, e.g., ṚV.1.51.4, where Indra slays Vṛtra and allows the sun to rise. Cf. ṚV.1.32.1. See Schmidt 1968 for in-depth analysis of the *valá* myth.

15. The exact time of the performance of the yearly *sóma* ritual is problematic and unresolved. The issue is further complicated as we may be dealing with two performances of the ritual. Stanley Insler (pers. comm., March 2010) thinks that the *sóma* ritual to Indra was performed at the summer solstice and that a parallel ritual to Varuṇa was performed at the winter solstice. Cf. Schmidt 1992.

16. See, e.g., ṚV.1.94.6. Agni is also ascribed multiple priestly roles at ṚV.2.5.1–8. For *adhvaryú*, see, e.g., ṚV.2.14.1–12.

17. See Schmidt 1968.

18. See Oberlies 1999: 47–48.

19. Oberlies (1998: 352) refers to the following stanza (as well as ṚV.10.173.1–5) to substantiate his claim about the selection of a "war king" (Kriegskönig). ṚV.10.124.8: *tā́ asya jyéṣṭham indriyáṃ sacante tā́ īm ā́ kṣeti svadháyā mádantīḥ, tā́ īṃ víśo ná rā́jānaṃ vṛṇānā́ bībhatsúvo ápa vṛtrā́d atiṣṭhan*. "They [waters] follow the most excellent Indriyan-power of this one [Indra]. He settles here among the ones becoming exhilarated on their own accord. They, [on choosing] him like the clans choose for themselves a chieftain, in horror stood away from Vṛtra." Here waters (or perhaps *sóma*) acquiesce to Indra's physical nature (*indriyá*) and select him, just as clans choose their chieftain. This stanza thus implies that a selection process determines the position of a human chieftain, especially before battle with Vṛtra, the paradigmatic obstacle to Āryan concerns. For discussion of this stanza, see Schmidt 1992: 339. Oberlies also states that separate individuals are invested with tribal leadership in times of migratory warfare and in times of settled peace. According to Oberlies, the latter period is governed in the cosmic realm by Varuṇa, who functions as the "peace king" (Friedenskönig) and deals with domestic affairs, such as justice and punishment (1998: 333–362). He seems unaware, however, that both functions are ascribed to a single individual, chieftain Trasadasyu (ṚV.4.42.1–10). As far as I can tell, Oberlies (354 n. 95) mentions Trasadasyu only in passing.

20. Schlerath (1960) and Schmidt (1978: 374–375) also equate the identities of the human chieftain and Indra.

21. Scharfe (1992) succinctly states: "At the earliest stage of Indian society, we find, then, the *rā́jan*-s as temporary leaders in times of war, chosen probably from among the various *viśpáti*-s, the clan chiefs that ruled the settlements. In the course of time, many a powerful warlord usurped permanent power and established a dynasty. Their descendents formed a privileged class" (314). In the same work, Scharfe also states: "The office of *rā́jan* may have fallen to men of a proven family for successive generations, to be permanent at an early time" (312). For comparable sentiments, see Schlerath 1960: 111–127; Schmidt 1978: 374–375, and 1992: 338, 341; Kulke 1992: 188–198; and Oberlies 1998: 348–350, 391–447. In a similar vein, Witzel (1997b) argues that in the post-Ṛgvedic period, Kuru kings came from stable lineages.

22. Cf. Klein 1985, 1: 200, 204–205 and Geldner 1951, 3: 102.

23. Proferes (2007: 22) has aptly observed that while Ṛgvedic gods represent human conduct and ideals, we should not directly equate their positions and actions with human relationships or institutions. His point here is that we have to maintain a nuanced and critical view in relation to what ritualists say about the gods and what may have been the reality on the ground, so to speak.

24. The *Ṛgveda* also represents but one segment of Āryan ritual culture. One need only look to the *Atharvaveda* for parallel ritual traditions.

25. See Brereton 1981.

26. See also ṚV.6.46.7: *yád indra nā́huṣīṣv ā́ṁ ójo nṛmṇáṃ ca kṛṣṭíṣu, yád vā páñca kṣitīnā́ṃ dyumnám ā́ bhara satrā́ víśvāni paúṃsyā*. "O Indra, the power [*ójas*] and

manhood [*nṛmṇá*] that exists here among the Nahuṣa communities, or the majesty that belongs to the five settlements; bring them here, all masculine qualities/powers [*paúṃsya-*] completely." And ṚV.8.9.2: *yád antárikṣe yád diví yát páñca mā́nuṣāṁ ánu, nṛmṇáṃ tád dhattam aśvinā*. "What [manhood] is in the atmosphere, or in heaven, or among the five descendants of Manu, establish that manhood [*nṛmṇá* on Vatsa (or us)], O Aśvins." Cf. ṚV.6.19.6.

27. ṚV.8.98.12c: *sá no rāsva suvíryam*.

28. For the use of the term *suvíra*, see chapter 2.

29. ṚV.7.56.7: *ugráṃ va ója sthirā́ śávāṃsy ádhā marúdbhir gaṇás túviṣmān*. "The power [*ójas*] of you all is powerful, and steadfast is [your] manifold might [*śávas-*]: thus due to the Maruts [your] horde is full of vigor." Geldner (1951, 2: 231) suggests that the Maruts or the singers of the hymn could be the clan.

30. Cf. Connerton 1989: 70–71 and Strathern 1996: 28.

31. See Douglas (1973), who argues that the body serves as a "natural symbol" of society, and the powers and prohibitions associated with the social structure are reproduced on the human body. Various types of bodily symbolism thus grant certain individuals influence in society.

32. To counter the separation of mind from body in Cartesian dualism, Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987) take their cue from Douglas (1966, 1973) and propose three perspectives from which the body can be interpreted: (1) The "individual body," the "lived self," which refers to the "phenomenological sense of the lived experience of the body-self"; (2) the "social body," which refers to the "representational uses of the body as a natural symbol with which to think about nature, society, and culture"; and (3) the "body politic," which refers to the way in which social, political, and legal systems regulate, condition, and control individual and collective bodies. Hence, Scheper-Hughes and Lock draw the conclusion that the body functions "as simultaneously a physical and symbolic artifact, as both naturally and culturally produced, and as securely anchored in a particular historical moment" (7). For an astute evaluation of the body theories of Mauss, Scheper-Hughes and Lock, Douglas, Bourdieu, and Connerton, see Strathern 1996: 1–39.

33. See, e.g., Connerton 1989, Strathern 1996, and LaFleur 1998.

34. While this is not the place to consider this issue, stanzas such as these raise theoretical problems about the annual performance of *sóma* rituals, or at least raise the question of whether some form of the rite could be performed ad hoc whenever and wherever Indra's presence was needed during times of seasonal movement, particularly before cattle raids or battle. Rau (1957: 88) and Schmidt (1992: 338–389) both suggest that the classical *rājasūya* rite could be performed as needed. In this vein, Kane (1974, 2.II: 1134) states that the classical *agniṣṭoma* ritual should be performed in spring (*vasanta*) every year, yet he also points out that a version of it could be performed on the day of the new and full moon (as part of the *darśapūrṇamāsa* ritual). Furthermore, ṚV.8.91 of Apālā Ātreyī appears to be a performance of an incidental *sóma* rite. On this hymn, see Jamison 1991: 149–152, 163–171. See also Schmidt (2009), who suggests that ṚV.1.28 was used in some form of incidental domestic ritual that involved the pressing of *sóma* or at least drew heavily on *sóma* imagery.

35. For *krátu*, see Strunk 1975 and Gonda 1989.

36. ṚV.3.51.2a: *śatákratum arṇaváṃ śākínaṃ náraṃ*, and ṚV.8.92.8c: *náram avāryákratum*, respectively.

37. ṚV.10.29.7ab: *abhí krátvā náryaḥ paúṃsyaiś ca*. For discussion on the meaning of the adjective *nárya*, "manly, belonging to men," see Wackernagel (AIG II, 2: 805, 808).

38. While the use of the verb √*yaj* ("to sacrifice") could mean that individuals offer sacrifices to Indra's physical nature (*indriyá*), its use in the reflexive middle voice most likely means that through sacrifice men gain Indra-like qualities. Cf. ṚV.7.36.5a: *yájante asya sakhyáṃ váyaś ca*. "They gain through sacrifice his partnership and vitality." Geldner (1951, 1: 451) supplies: "Dann opfern die andern dem indrischen (Namen)." For discussion of the social implications of ṚV.4.24.5, see Oberlies 1998: 434–435, 440, and Whitaker 2007. For *indriyá*, see also my essay "What Makes Indra Indra?" (forthcoming).

39. For the two other uses of the denominative √*vīray*, see ṚV.1.116.5a, to the Aśvins (*avīrayethām*), and ṚV.10.128.5b, to the All-Gods (*vīrayadhvam*).

40. Cf. also ṚV.1.55.3: *tváṃ tám indra párvataṃ ná bhójase mahó nṛmṇásya dhármaṇām irajyasi, prá vīryèṇa devátāti cekite víśvasmā ugráḥ kármaṇe puróhitaḥ*. "O Indra, like the mountain, you [are in control of him = Soma] so as to take enjoyment. You are in control of the foundations of great manhood. Among the gods, he [Indra] stands out due to [his] manliness [*vīryà*]. For all actions, the powerful one is placed in front."

41. See also ṚV.10.166.2, where the poet states that like Indra, he is a destroyer of enemies. Cf. Oberlies 1998: 412.

42. For √*śṛdh/śardh*, see Mayrhofer EWA 2: 619.

43. Cf. Brereton 2004: 331–337. At the *13th World Sanskrit Conference*, in his paper titled "The Early Evolution of the *Puróhita*," Brereton also made similar remarks about the fluidity of martial and priestly roles, especially as attested by Indra/Bṛhaspati.

44. See, e.g., ṚV.1.166.7cd, to the Maruts: *árcanty arkám madirásya pītáye vidúr vīrásya prathamāni paúṃsyā*. "They chant the chant for the drink of exhilaration [since] they know the foremost masculine acts/qualities [*paúṃsya-*] of the brave man [*vīrá*]." See Geldner (1951, 1: 242), who notes Sāyana's view that Indra is the *vīrá* in question. Cf. also ṚV.6.66.10, to the Maruts: *tvíṣīmanto adhvarásyeva didyút tṛṣucyávaso juhvò nāgnéḥ, arcátrayo dhúnayo ná vīrā́ bhrā́jajjanmāno marúto ádhṛṣṭāḥ*. "Fiery like the missile of the rite, agitating with thirst like the tongues of fire, the Maruts are chanting like boisterous brave men [*vīrá-*], with blazing births, not to be dared against."

45. See, e.g., ṚV.2.26.2a, to Bṛhaspati: *yájasva vīra*. "Perform the sacrifice for yourself, O brave man." For a detailed and insightful study on Bṛhaspati and Indra, see Schmidt 1968.

46. Geldner (1951, 1: 308) translates the present participle *vanuṣyatáḥ-* here as a genitive singular; i.e., "*vīrá-* of the covetous one." However, it appears in this hymn (1a) and elsewhere as the direct object of √*van* ("to vanquish") and is thus used substantively as an accusative plural. I follow Geldner on the enjambment of lines bc. Lubotsky (1997: 960) classifies √*budh* as an aorist subjunctive, while Gotō (1987: 217) takes it as indicative.

47. See ṚV.1.165.7: *bhū́ri cakartha yújyebhir asmé samānébhir vṛ́sabha paúṃsyebhiḥ, bhū́rīṇi hí kṛ́ṇávāmā śaviṣṭhéndra krátvā maruto yád vā́śāma*. "'You did many things with us as yokemates, with [our] united masculine qualities [*paúṃsya-*], O bull. Indeed, we will do many things, O mightiest Indra, according to [our or your] resolve, if we—the Maruts!—will wish it.'"

48. This is implied throughout ṚV.2.25.1–5d, where the refrain "whomever the lord of the sacred formulation makes a yokemate" (*yáṃyaṃ yújaṃ kṛ́ṇuté bráhmaṇas pátiḥ*) repeatedly appears. As Indra's charioteer, Pūṣan is a yokemate (ṚV.6.56.2b; cf. ṚV.10.102.12d, where a steer (*vádhri*) is Indra's yokemate), and battle fury (*manyú*) is a yokemate who equally dominates barbarians and Āryans (ṚV.10.83.1, ṚV.10.83.3, ṚV.10.84.4). Indra makes his mace (*vájra*) his yokemate (ṚV.1.33.10; cf. ṚV.10.92.7d), and *sóma* supports a yokemate in competitions for the prize (ṚV.9.65.12. See ṚV.4.28.1a and 2a, where *sóma* and Indra are yokemates, cf. ṚV.6.44.22, ṚV.8.17.3a, ṚV.9.11.9c). Either Soma or a human is Indra's yokemate at ṚV.10.55.8: *yujā́ kármāṇi janáyan viśvaújā aśastihā́ viśvámanās turāṣā́ṭ, pītví sómasya divá ā́ vṛdhānáḥ śúro nír yudhā́dhamad dásyūn*. "With [his] yokemate, the one with total power [Indra] is producing deeds, smashing slander, focused on all, dominating the forceful ones. After drinking of *sóma*, from heaven he is being strengthened here. The champion blew the barbarians away in battle." At ṚV.10.89.8d, a yokemate is an ally (*mitrá*; cf. ṚV.8.83.2, where the poets ask for Varuṇa, Mitra, and Aryaman [Ādityas] to be their yokemates). Elsewhere, Indra is summoned as the "ancient yokemate of wealth" (ṚV.6.45.19a: *pratnáṃ rayīṇā́ṃ yújaṃ*; cf. ṚV.1.7.5, ṚV.7.43.5c, and ṚV.7.95.4d, where "wealth" is a yokemate). As a yokemate, Indra conquers enemies (ṚV.1.8.4, ṚV.1.102.4a, ṚV.8.92.31–32), and dominates in contests for the prize (ṚV.1.129.4, ṚV.4.32.6c, ṚV.7.32.20b), while also allowing poets to overcome Vṛtra or obstacles (ṚV.7.48.2).

49. Cf. ṚV.5.34.8, where Bṛhaspati makes a yokemate of a munificent man (*maghávan*) who has "all troops" (*viśváśardhas*) at his disposal.

50. He could also be a poet-priest, as Indra makes a poet his yokemate at ṚV.5.30.8 and ṚV.10.42.4c (cf. ṚV.7.31.6c).

51. Taking his cue from Schmidt, Oberlies (1998: 432) also points out that, as the god Bṛhaspati, Indra takes on certain priestly functions and may even be a kind of priest-king in this role.

52. To highlight the way in which priestly figures perform martial acts, Indra's priestly alter ego, Bṛhaspati often carries out martial functions. For example, see ṚV.2.23–26 and ṚV.10.67–68, where among Bṛhaspati's titles are chieftain and "lord of [warrior] bands" (ṚV.2.23.1a: *gaṇā́nāṃ tvā gaṇápatiṃ havāmahe*). On this, see Schmidt 1968: 32, 104.

53. See ṚV.4.17.15a and ṚV.6.51.12bc. See also Oberlies (1998: 274f. n. 603), who associates Indra with the *hótṛ* and the *brahmán*.

54. As Brereton (2004: 331) observes in relation to the early Vedic period: "The priests do not perform the sacrifice *for* the *yájamāna*, but rather the *yájamāna* performs the sacrifice *through* the priests. The *yájamāna* really is the one 'sacrificing for himself,' as his name implies, for it is the *yájamāna* who makes the offerings, even though the priests actually pressed and poured the *soma* and prepared and offered the other oblations."

55. At ṚV.8.96.15cd, both gods appear independent of each other, as Bṛhaspati acts as Indra's yokemate in battle with the godless clans (*víśo ádevīr*).

56. Note at ṚV.4.42.1, chieftain Trasadasyu claims the "rulership of the Kṣatriya (one who has dominion/the power to rule)" throughout "all his lifetime" (*rāṣṭráṃ kṣatríyasya víśvāyoḥ*). (Cf. ṚV.7.34.11b, where *víśvāyu* qualifies *kṣatrá*.) We should note, however, that Trasadasyu's political position appears to have been reaffirmed "now, as before" (1a: *dvitā́*), which suggests that the chieftain's position has been ritually substantiated more than once. On *dvitā́*, see Tichy (1983: 225–226). At ṚV.4.42.4, Trasadasyu acts as Indra and calls himself the "son of Aditi" (*putró áditeḥ*), which here most likely refers to his dual role as Indra and Varuṇa, the latter god being one of the three primary Ādityas, or "sons of Aditi". At ṚV.4.42.5ab, Trasadasyu employs similar language for the way he is invoked (*mā́m náraḥ svàśvāḥ vājáyanto mā́ṃ vṛtā́ḥ samáraṇe havante*) that other poets use when they invoke Indra (e.g., ṚV.4.25.8d: *índraṃ náro vājayánto havante*).

57. For *abhíbhūtyojas*, see also ṚV.1.52.7d, ṚV.3.34.6d, ṚV.3.48.4a, ṚV.6.18.1a, and ṚV.10.83.4a. Cf. also ṚV.4.41.4.

58. Cf. ṚV.5.32.7b (*sáho ápratītam*).

59. Schmidt concludes (1992: 345): "The hymn probably refers to a juncture in the ritual when the king passes from his function of Varuṇa to that of Indra. This corresponds to the time when the king leaves for his annual raiding expedition. He transfers his Varuṇa-power in the residence to a priest who acknowledges the king's assumption of the Indra-power."

60. One of the few times we see real figures and perhaps real historical events appears at ṚV.7.18.1-25, the so–called "Ten Kings' Battle" hymn. In this hymn, Indra defeats many named opponents for king Sudās. Witzel (1997b: 261ff.) argues that this hymn represents the rise to political supremacy of the Bharata-Kuru tribe under the leadership of King Sudās, who appears to have defeated his Pūru enemies at a battle of ten kings.

61. ṚV.7.34.6: *tmánā samátsu hinóta yajñáṃ dádhāta ketúṃ jánāya vīrám*. "On your own accord, urge on the sacrifice at the battles: Establish it as a beacon, a brave man for the tribe."

62. ṚV.8.100.2cd: *ásaś ca tváṃ dakṣiṇatáḥ sákhā mé 'dhā vṛtrā́ṇi jaṅghanāva bhū́ri*. "And you will be my partner on my right side. Thus the two of us will keep smashing many obstacles."

63. Kazzazi (2001: 125–220) provides a straightforward account of terms for women in the *Ṛgveda*.

64. See, e.g., ṚV.7.1.11, where men (*nár-*) should not be without offspring (*aśéṣas, prajā́vant*) or lacking in "virile/brave males" (*avíratā*), or else this will incur scorn.

65. Jamison recently presented two papers (*13th World Sanskrit Conference*, July 2006, Edinburgh, Scotland; *4th International Vedic Workshop*, May 2007, Austin, TX) on the late innovative appearance of the sacrificer's wife in the *Ṛgveda*. In her presidential address to the *American Oriental Society* (March 2010), Jamison outlined the contested nature of the role of the sacrificer's wife in rituals, as attested in late hymns, and also some of the apparent tensions between conservative and innovative elements.

66. See Kuiper (1960: 217–242).

67. ṚV.4.30.8: *etád ghéd utá vīryàm índra cakártha paúṃsyam, stríyaṃ yád durhaṇāyúvaṃ vádhīr duhitáraṃ diváḥ*. "And thus you surely performed this manly act [*vīryà*], O Indra, this masculine act [*paúṃsya*], when you struck the intensely angry woman, the daughter of heaven [Uṣas]."

68. *Paúṃsya* derives from *púmaṁs*, which refers to a "male, man", especially in relation to females. See, e.g., ṚV.1.124.7a, ṚV.1.164.16a, ṚV.3.29.13, and ṚV.10.32.3cd. At ṚV.1.139.8a–c, poets ask the Maruts to make sure that their "masculine qualities" (*paúṃsya-*) not grow old (*mā́ √jṛ*); i.e., to remain young or fresh. See also ṚV.1.155.3–4. Cf. ṚV.10.23.5c.

69. For "masculinity of a bull" (*vṛ́ṣaṇaś ca paúṃsye*), see ṚV.4.41.6b (= ṚV.10.92.7b). See also ṚV.6.36.3ab (*vṛ́ṣṇyāni paúṃsyāni*), ṚV.8.6.31bc (*paúṃsyam . . . vṛ́ṣṇyam*), ṚV.8.7.23c (*vṛ́ṣṇi paúṃsyam*), and ṚV.10.55.7a (*vṛ́ṣṇyā paúṃsyāni*).

70. ṚV.6.28.8: *úpedám upapárcanam āsú góṣū́pa pṛcyatām, úpa ṛṣabhásya rétasy úpendra táva vīryè*. "Let this concoction be infused, let it be infused among the cows. Let it be infused in the semen of the bull, O Indra, let it be infused in your manly power [*vīryà*]."

71. ṚV.5.61.4-5: *párā vīrāsa etana máryāso bhádrajānayaḥ, agnitápo yáthāsatha. sánat sā́śvyam paśúm utá gávyaṃ śatā́vayam, śyāvā́śvastutāya yā́ dór vīrā́yopabárbṛhat*. "Go forth, O brave men, you adolescents with auspicious wives, so that you will be hot as Fire. She [the auspicious wife] will win livestock in the form of horses, cattle, and a hundred sheep, this one who has raised her forearm tightly around her brave man [*vīrá*], who is praised by Śyāvāśva."

72. For an extended interpretation of this hymn and the ritual implications of the exchange between Indra and his wife, see Jamison (1996b: 74–88).

73. ṚV.10.95.5d: *rā́jā me vīra tanvàs tád āsīḥ*.

74. For *sapátnī-*, Geldner (1951, 3: 388) supplies "rivals (in love)" (Nebenbuhlerinnen). Mayrhofer (EWA 2: 74) also provides "auxiliary, co-wife" (Nebenfrau). Cf. *vīrápatnī* ("wife of a brave man") at ṚV.1.104.4c and ṚV.6.49.7b.

CHAPTER 1

1. Beekes (1995: 39) states that in Indo-European cultures: "A 'free man' was **uiHró-* (Skt. *vīrá-*, Lith. *výras*, Lat. *vir*, OIr. *fer*, Goth., *wair*), but also **h₂nḗr* (Skt. *nár-*, Arm. *ayr*, Gr. *anḗr*, Osc., Umbr. *ner-*, W. *ner*). This last was a title of more honor, but the exact difference in meaning is not known." In Attic Greek, **h₂nḗr* becomes with epenthesis acc. *ándra*, gen. *andrós*. See Beekes (1995: 78) and Watkins (2000: 58).

2. The abstract neuter noun *nṛmṇá* is formed from an unaccented zero grade *nṛ* (< *nár*) with the *mṇá* suffix. It is common to interpret *nṛmṇá* anywhere from "manliness, courage, bravery, manly power, vigor, virility" or "manly act." See Grassmann (1996 [1873]: 751), Monier-Williams (1988 [1899]: 568), Wackernagel (AIG I: 190; II, 2: 777), and Mayrhofer (EWA 2: 19). The abstract neuter noun *paúṃsya* derives from *púmaṁs*, which is another word for "male, man". It is attested only 15 times in the *Ṛgveda*, yet becomes a prevalent word for "male, man" in later Sanskrit literature. In the *Ṛgveda*, *púmaṁs* features typically in the vicinity of females.

3. For a review of past exegesis on the two terms, see also Pinault 2002a: 199–204. I would like to thank Pinault for kindly sending me his paper on the terms *nár* and *vīrá* and his critical review of Kazzazi. See Pinault (2002a, 2002b).

4. Kazzazi incorrectly counts 439 appearances of *nár* and 117 appearances of *vīrá*. Pinault (2002a: 202) correctly counts, aside from compounds, 452 appearances of *nár* and 136 appearances of *vīrá* (my own count is 135).

5. Findly (1982: 22) states: "It is clear from its use in the Ṛgveda, that *nṛ́* does not always refer to men in general but rather, and more often, to priests, to warriors, to gods as heroes, or to gods and men together as heroes." Following Grassmann (1996 [1873]: 748–750), Findly also notes: "The percentage of use for the almost 450 citations of *nṛ́* in the Ṛgveda is as follows: men in general (~8%), priests (~36%), warriors, (~11%), gods as heroes (~42%), and gods and men together as heroes (~3%)" (22 n. 41).

6. Cf. Pinault 2002a: 201.

7. See ṚV.10.38.3–4 and ṚV.10.48.2. The fact that *dā́sa* and *dásyu* are negatively marked by their lack of ritual participation may explain why poets do not call them "men" (*nár-*). See Whitaker 2007.

8. On the patriarchal and misogynistic nature of Vedic culture, see Jamison 1996b: 3–26.

9. ṚV.3.8.6a. Cf. ṚV.3.2.6b and ṚV.6.1.2cd.

10. ṚV.2.19.1d (*brahmaṇyántaś ca náraḥ*).

11. See, e.g., ṚV.2.36.1 and ṚV.3.35.8.

12. ṚV.3.62.12: *devā́ṃ náraḥ savitā́raṃ víprā yajñaíḥ suvṛ́ktibhiḥ, namasyánti dhiyéṣitā́ḥ*.

13. For *vidátha*, see Thieme 1949.

14. ṚV.10.107.3cd: *áthā náraḥ práyatadakṣiṇāso 'vadyabhiyā́ bahávaḥ pṛṇanti*. "Hence numerous men, whose sacrificial fee has been held forth, give due to fear of scorn."

15. See Heesterman (1993: 86–141), who discusses at length the role of fire worship in ancient India in social, economic, and political spheres.

16. ṚV.1.77.4a. Cf. ṚV.1.59.4d, ṚV.3.1.12d, and ṚV.4.5.2d.

17. The present participle of √*cit* could also mean "manifesting, appearing," which is the case elsewhere with a formulation (ṚV.2.34.7b: *bráhman*) and Agni (ṚV.5.15.5d).

18. See Geldner (1951, 2: 19), who compares this figurative expression with ṚV.1.189.2c, to Agni: *pū́ś ca pṛthví bahulā́ na urví*. "And be a broad fort, extensive and wide for us." And ṚV.10.87.22, where Agni is also called a fort (*púr*).

19. Cf., e.g., the refrain at ṚV.1.94.1-14d: *ágne sakhyé mā́ riṣāmā vayáṃ táva*. "O Fire, in your partnership, may we not be harmed."

20. I would to thank Theodore Proferes, whose suggestions helped clarify these stanzas (pers. comm., September 2008).

21. Geldner (1951, 1: 88) translates *áme* here as "in Aufregung"; i.e., Agni summons the god in his excitement or agitation. Cf. Witzel and Gotō (2007: 125), who supply "in Schrenken," that is, in panic, terror.

22. ṚV.1.66.7a: *séneva sṛṣṭā́maṃ dadhāti*.

23. ṚV.1.63.1 and ṚV.4.17.7, respectively. Note in both cases Geldner (1951, 1: 82; 2: 438) translates *áme √dhā* as "in Panik versetzen".

24. Cf. also ṚV.3.3.8, where men (*nár-*) praise (*prá √śaṃs*) Agni as a clan lord (*viśpátiṃ*), youthful guest (*yahvám átithiṃ*), the controller of insights (*yantáraṃ dhīnā́m*), and the devotee of his suppliants (*uśíjaṃ ca vāghátām*). At ṚV.10.45.1 and 3, a "manly minded" (*nṛmáṇāḥ*) individual with "good insight" (*svādhíḥ*) and an "eye for men" (*nṛcákṣāḥ*) kindles the Fire and sings to it. Cf. ṚV.10.92.14cd, where a "manly minded one" (*nṛmáṇas*) sings to Aditi, other divine wives, and the "youthful lord of the night" (*aktór yúvānaṃ . . . pátim*), who is most likely Agni (see Klein 1985, 2: 129).

25. See, e.g., ṚV.2.1.1d and 7c.

26. Findly (1982: 22) continues that in his role as a warrior and "Having power over men, Vaiśvānara suppresses the enemy soldiers which threaten the Aryan nation, having power for men, Vaiśvānara protects the Aryan soldiers against the enemy onslaught."

27. At ṚV.3.52.8b, a poet gives a cooked offering to Indra as the "best brave man among men" (*vīrátamāya nṛṇā́m*).

28. Cf. ṚV.1.5.9c.

29. Cf. ṚV.1.55.3b, to Indra: *mahó nṛmṇásya dhármaṇām irajyasi*. "You are in control of the foundations of great manhood." For this line, see Oldenberg 1909: 56 and Geldner 1951, 1: 70.

30. See Geldner 1951, 2: 128 n. 2.

31. On the grammar of *yásmin*, see Geldner 1951, 2: 128.

32. ṚV.1.67.3a: *háste dádhāno nṛmṇā́ víśvāni-*.

33. ṚV.1.32.7a and ṚV.3.30.8b.

34. Cf. ṚV.7.19.9b and ṚV.7.31.2.

35. This stanza also appears at ṚV.3.31.22, ṚV.3.32.17, ṚV.3.34–36.11, ṚV.3.38.10, ṚV.3.39.9, ṚV.3.43.8, ṚV.3.48–50.5, ṚV.10.89.18, and ṚV.10.104.11.

36. Cf. ṚV.8.24.19b: *sákhāya stómyaṃ náram*. "[Indra is] a man worthy to be praised for partnership."

37. See, e.g., ṚV.1.73.5, ṚV.2.6.4, and ṚV.10.81.6.

38. See ṚV.7.74.5–6. Cf. ṚV.1.174.10ab: *tvám asmā́kam indra viśvádha syā avṛ́kátamo narā́ṃ nṛpātā́*. "You, O Indra, should always be our protector of men among men, the one who best removes wolves (= enemies, threats)."

39. I follow the suggestions of Jamison (pers. comm., March 2003) and Brereton (pers. comm., February 2007) on the problematic preterite verb *apsanta* ("inspired"). For its hypothetical root *√bhas* ("to breath, blow"), see Mayrhofer (EWA 2: 257–258). The term *utsavá* is also unclear (it is most likely from *úd √sū* "to rile, stir up; to excite"). In later Sanskrit literature it means "festival". Geldner (1951, 1: 128) renders it this way and notes that it refers to battle. Witzel and Gotō (2007: 176) translate it as "Unternehmungen," i.e., undertakings, ventures.

40. Cf. Geldner 1951, 3: 392–393.

41. See, e.g., ṚV.6.73.3d: *bṛ́haspátir hánty amítram arkaíḥ*. "Bṛhaspati smashes the unallied one with [his] chants."

42. See, e.g., ṚV.2.12.14c, ṚV.6.17.3b, ṚV.6.23.5d, ṚV.6.38.4, and ṚV.10.49.1b. Cf. ṚV.1.80.1.

43. ṚV.4.1.15cd: *dṛḷháṃ náro vácasā daívyena vrajáṃ gómantam uśíjo ví vavruḥ*. "With divine speech, the men, the devotees, opened up the steadfast pen full of cows." On the identity of these men, see Schmidt (1968: 59).

44. See, e.g., ṚV.10.42.1cd: *vācā́ viprās tarata vā́cam aryó ní rāmaya jaritaḥ sóma índram*. "Through [your] speech, O inspired ones, prevail over the speech of the stranger. Make Indra stop at [our] *sóma* [offering], O singer."

45. See ṚV.8.51.4, where after receiving a ritual chant, Indra's *paúṃsya* was produced (√*jan*) when the god made all living creatures cry out.

46. E.g., for *nṛmṇá*, see ṚV.4.22.9 and ṚV.10.102.8; for *paúṃsya*, see ṚV.8.3.20 and ṚV.8.7.23; for *vīryà*, see ṚV.1.32.1, ṚV.2.30.10, ṚV.5.29.13, ṚV.8.63.6, ṚV.8.100.1, and ṚV.9.113.1.

47. Proferes (2007: 27, 131) suggests that the Maruts represent the paradigmatic divine clans, who, like human clans, unite under a single warlord for battle.

48. See Geldner 1951, 1: 237 for discussion of this hymn and others attributed to the poet Agastya.

49. ṚV.5.59.4b.

50. ṚV.9.7.4: *pári yát kā́vyā kavír nṛmṇā́ vásāno árṣati, svàr vā́jí siṣāsati*. "When the poet, being clothed in poetic qualities, in manly qualities (*nṛmṇá-*), rushes about, as a prize-winning horse, he strives to win the Sun."

51. I follow the suggestions of Jamison (pers. comm., September 2004) and Brereton (pers. comm., November 2004). For √*rāj* ("to rule"), see the preceding stanza. For different translations, see Geldner 1951, 2: 37 and Klein 1985, 1: 388.

52. ṚV.10.22.3b and ṚV.1.55.3b (both cited above).

53. At ṚV.1.51.5 and ṚV.8.96.13, the "manly minded" (*nṛmáṇa*) Indra defeats various opponents. Cf. ṚV.7.19.4ab: *tváṃ nṛ́bhir nṛmaṇo devávītau bhū́riṇi vṛtrā́ haryaśva haṃsi*. "With men, O manly minded one, in pursuit of the gods, you, bay horse owner, smash many obstacles." Cf. ṚV.4.16.9 and ṚV.5.50.4.

54. Drawing a bow is called a masculine act at ṚV.9.99.1b: *dhánus tanvanti paúṃsyam*.

55. I follow Geldner's (1951, 3: 190) reading of *vikhādé* as a metaphor for battle, presumably from *ví* √*khād* ("to bite, chew apart; to crush, grind [with teeth]"). Cf. Grassmann 1996 [1873]: 1266.

56. See Thieme 1938; Brereton 1981: 150–162; and Whitaker 2007.

57. See Geldner (1951, 2: 226) for line a. In what looks like another negative characterization of rival Āryans, see ṚV.1.169.6d, where antelopes halt at a ford "like the masculine acts of a stranger" (*nā́ryaḥ paúṃsyāni*).

58. At ṚV.10.87.25, the poet asks Agni to rend asunder the "strength" (*bála*) and "manliness" (*vīryà*) of a Rakṣas ("malevolent being, force"), who is also called a Yātudhāna (perhaps "one who establishes a feud; vengeful one"). Interestingly, at ṚV.7.104.15, the poet reacts angrily to being called a Yātudhāna and curses his accuser to be deprived of "ten brave men" (*vīraír daśábhir*).

59. ṚV.10.102.8: *śunám aṣṭrāvy àcarat kapardí varatrā́yāṃ dā́rv ānáhyamānaḥ, nṛmṇā́ni kṛṇván baháve jánāya gā́ḥ paspaśānás táviṣīr adhatta*. "Whip in hand, with braided hair, he progressed successfully, lashing the wood piece to the strap. Performing manly acts [*nṛmṇá-*] for many people, repeatedly watching the cows, he

took on vigorous qualities." For the wider context of the hymn in which this stanza appears, see Brereton 2002: 224–234.

60. For the problematic adjective *súmakha*, see Mayrhofer (EWA 2: 288).

61. The phrase *víśvāsu dhūrṣú* ("in all chariot poles") appears to refer figuratively to difficult activity or warfare. See Geldner 1951, 3: 211 n. 1. For the term *dhúr*, see Sparreboom 1985: 132.

62. For *asuryà vā́ja*, see Hale 1986: 93.

CHAPTER 2

1. See Watkins (2000: 101), who lays out the Indo-European attestations of **u̯iH-ró/wĭ́-ro*, appearing in English words such as "virile, virility, virtue, werewolf, wergild, world, virtuoso," and possibly "court," from **co-vir-ia*, meaning "men together." The noun *wĭ́-ro* derives from the root **wei̯ə-*, which, according to Watkins (97), means: "To go after something, pursue with vigor, desire, with noun forms meaning force, power." It is from this root, via Latin, that we get the English words "vim, violate, violent." Cf. Mayrhofer (EWA 2: 569).

2. Cf. Grassmann (1996 [1873]), Griffith (1973 [1889–]), Monier-Williams (1988 [1899]), Geldner (1951 [1923]), and Mayrhofer (EWA 2: 569–570), who all variously offer "hero, champion, warrior, brave man, man, son."

3. Hansen (1992: 1) states: "The Sanskrit noun for heroism, which continues to be used in many Indian languages today, is *vīrya*, or in its inflected form, *vīryam*. The hero is known as a *vīra*, *vīr*, or *bīr*, depending on the linguistic region. The concept of heroism cannot be glossed without reference to masculinity, insofar as *vīryam* is also commonly used with the meaning 'semen.' It appears that Brahminical culture in India constructed the masculine body as the site of virility and metaphorized its notion of heroism from the male organ's capacity for potency and firmness. From the outset, then heroism or *vīryam* comes bundled as a gendered category."

4. I have been unable to find any work that has critically theorized this concept in ancient India. Even the recent edited volume *The Concept of Hero in Indian Culture* lacks any analytical reflection on that exact nature of what heroism means or entails. Indeed, in her introduction to the volume, Brückner (2007: x) states that all the Sanskrit words *vīra*, *marya*, *śūra/śūla*, and *malla* mean "hero" and correspond to the ancient Greek term *hḗrōs*. Cf. also Bollée (2007: 1–5) in the same volume.

5. Greek *hḗrōs* perhaps derives from the PIE root **ser* ("to protect"). See Watkins (2000: 76).

6. See Hägg (1999), who presents a comprehensive volume on the history and development of hero cults in ancient Greece.

7. See Schmitt 1967: 61–102, Beekes 1995: 4, and Watkins 1995: 12–13, 173–178 for discussion on the parallel Vedic and Greek appearances of the formula *śrávas ákṣitam* and *kléos áphthiton*, "undiminished fame" (PIE **ḱléuos n̥d^{h}g^{wh}itom*). We can also compare Sanskrit *máhi śrávas* and Greek *méga kléos* (PIE **megh$_2$ ḱléuos*), and *śrávas nṝṇā́m* and *kléa andrōn* (PIE **ḱléuesh$_2$ h$_2$nróm*).

8. See also Caracchi (2002), who has drawn a similar conclusion with regard to the use of the two terms in medieval *bhakti* texts of the *sant* tradition.

9. I would like to thank Theodore Proferes (pers. comm., July 2006), who aptly pointed out that there is no corresponding term for "cowardice" within the semantic field of *vīrá* and *vīryà*. There is also a striking lack of words meaning "unmanly" in the *Ṛgveda*. There is only a single appearance of *ápūruṣa* (ṚV.10.155.3b; cf. ṚV.1.133.6f: *ápūruṣaghnaḥ*-); scattered appearances of *ámānuṣa* (ṚV.2.11.10b, ṚV.8.70.11a, and ṚV.10.22.7d, 8d); and a few appearances of *avíra* (ṚV.7.4.6c, ṚV.7.61.4c, ṚV.10.86.9a, and ṚV.10.95.3c; cf. *avíratā*). However, these three terms may not mean "unmanly, not a man," but, respectively, "without a man," "not belonging to the descendants of Manu (the first sacrificer)," and "lacking in brave males/warriors."

10. ṚV.6.45.8c: *vīrásya pṛtanāṣáhaḥ*. Cf. ṚV.8.98.10c: *á vīrám pṛtanāṣáham*. "Here [bring] a brave man who dominates in battles."

11. Cf. ṚV.1.56.3, where Indra's might (*śávas*) is either "dustless in [its] masculine power" or "at [his] masculine act" (*areṇú paúṃsye*); i.e., during battles.

12. ṚV.7.1.21d: *mā́ vīró asmán náryo ví dāsīt*. "Let the manly brave man not be depleted from us."

13. Cf. ṚV.4.27.2ab, to the falcon: *ná ghā sá mā́m ápa jóṣaṃ jabhārābhím āsa tvákṣasā vīryèṇa*. "He did not bear me away against [my] will. I was superior to him due to [my] creative energy, due to [my] manly power."

14. Cf. ṚV.6.19.13ab, to Indra: *vayáṃ ta ebhíḥ puruhūta sakhyaíḥ śátroḥ-śatror úttara ít syāma*. "Due to these partnerships of yours, O much-invoked one, we shall surely be on top of each and every enemy."

15. The term *vīrá* appears 83 times in the singular, 1 time in the dual, and 51 times in the plural. In the singular, it typically designates Indra, and in the plural it refers to the Maruts or human warriors.

16. For *jána*, see Rau (1957: 64–66), Schlerath (1960: 51), and Proferes (2007: 13–15), who prefers "people" rather than "tribe" for this term.

17. Cf. Grassmann 1996 [1873]: 183 and Lubotsky 1997: 255.

18. Cf. ṚV.2.17.3ab, to Indra: *ádhākṛṇoḥ prathamáṃ vīryàm mahád yád asyā́gre bráhmaṇā śúṣmam aírayaḥ*. "Thus you performed the foremost great manly act, when in the beginning you set [your] ferocity in motion through a formulation belonging to this one."

19. Cf. ṚV.1.55.3cd: *prá vīryèṇa devátāti cekite víśvasmā ugráḥ kármaṇe puróhitaḥ*. "Among the gods, he [Indra] stands out due to [his] manliness. For all actions the powerful one is placed in front."

20. Cf. ṚV.8.62.7: *víśve ta indra vīryàṃ devā́ ánu krátuṃ daduḥ, bhúvo víśvasya gópatiḥ puruṣṭuta bhadrā́ rātáyaḥ*. "O Indra, all gods have yielded manly power (*vīryà*) and resolve to you. You will become the herdsman of them all, O much praised one. Auspicious are Indra's gifts."

21. ṚV.7.48.3 and ṚV.10.48.2.

22. Oldenberg (1909: 82) and Geldner (1951, 1: 104) both interpret *nahí . . . káḥ*- as an indefinite pronominal construction (= *nahí kás cit*), which changes the initial hemistich from a question to a statement; i.e., no one surpasses Indra in *vīryà*.

23. See, e.g., ṚV.5.30.1: *kvà syá vīráḥ kó apaśyad índraṃ sukháratham íyamānaṃ háribhyām, yó rāyā́ vajrí sutásomam ichán tád óko gántā puruhūtá ūtí*. "Where is this brave man? Who has seen Indra? The one whose chariot has a good hub, traveling

with two bay horses, the mace wielder, who, seeking with wealth one who has pressed *sóma*, coming to that dwelling, when he is much invoked, with help."

24. ṚV.1.100.10: *sá gṛ́mebhiḥ sánitā sá ráthebhir vidé víśvābhiḥ kṛṣṭíbhir nv àdyá, sá paúṃsyebhir abhibhū́r áśastīr marútvān no bhavatv índra ūtí*. "He is a winner with his bands, he with the chariots; he is known by all the communities now today. Due to his masculine acts [or qualities] he is superior to insults. Accompanied by the Maruts let Indra be present for us with aid." The term *áśasti* in the plural could also refer to "slanderous people".

25. Even the gods appear to follow Indra's manly example at ṚV.1.163.8: *ánu tvā rátho ánu máryo arvann ánu gā́vó 'nu bhágaḥ kanínām, ánu vrā́tāsas táva sakhyám īyur ánu devā́ mamire vīryàṃ te*. "The chariot follows you, the adolescent follows, O race horse, the cows follow, the apportioner of the maidens follows, the troops follow after your partnership. The gods measured themselves after your manliness."

26. The hymn in which this stanza appears (ṚV.4.18.1–13) documents threats to Indra from various enemies, including Vṛtra and Indra's father, whom Indra kills. See Geldner (1951, 1: 440–441) for a discussion of this hymn.

27. See, e.g., ṚV.7.34.20: *ā́ yán naḥ pátnīr gámanty áchā tváṣṭā supāṇír dádhātu vīrā́n*. "When wives will come toward us, let good-handed Tvaṣṭṛ confer brave men (*vīrá-*)." Cf. ṚV.3.4.9 (= ṚV.7.2.9) and ṚV.2.3.9. The god Death is instructed at ṚV.10.18.1d: *mā́ náḥ prajā́ṃ rīriṣo mótá vīrā́n*. "Do not harm our progeny, nor our brave men (*vīrá-*)." Cf. also ṚV.1.114.8: *mā́ nas toké tánaye mā́ na āyaú mā́ no góṣu mā́ no áśveṣu rīriṣaḥ, vīrā́n mā́ no rudra bhāmitó vadhīr havíṣmantaḥ sádam ít tvā havāmahe*. "Not to our offspring and descendants, not to our lively one, not to our cows, do no harm to our horses. Do not slay our brave men (*vīrá-*), O Rudra, when enraged. With oblations, we will always invoke just you." Cf. ṚV.2.33.4, for Rudra, healing, and *vīrá-*. For a similar motif relating to healing and *vīryà*, see ṚV.10.39.5. The symbolism of healing also appears at ṚV.10.97.19 and 21, where *vīryà* is associated with herbs.

28. E.g., in translating *vīrá*, Renou (EVP) oscillates between "homme," "un homme éminent," "héros," "personnage," or "fils-d'élite [elite or select sons]".

29. See, e.g., ṚV.2.33.1.

30. See ṚV.1.64.4d.

31. ṚV.5.85.4-5.

32. For uses of the genitive, see Delbrück 1976: 151–164 and Speijer 1998: 81–101.

33. For the Ādityas, see Brereton 1981. For the Ādityas and *vīrá-*, see ṚV.1.188.4: *prācínam barhír ójasā sahásravīram astṛṇan, yátrādityā virā́jatha*. "With power, they strewed eastwards the sacred grass that brings a thousand brave men, from where, O Ādityas, you all rule afar."

34. See ṚV.1.85.8d, where the Maruts are called "men possessing a fiery appearance like chieftains" (*rā́jāna iva tveṣásaṃdṛśo náraḥ*).

35. ṚV.5.55.2 (*ví √rāj*). The entire hymn (ṚV.5.55.1–10) documents the Maruts' control of cosmological realities.

36. ṚV.8.96.8a.

37. ṚV.1.167.5.

38. ṚV.1.64.2. Cf. Hale 1986: 81.

39. On the syntax of this stanza and different identities of the Asura and the *vīrá-*, see Geldner 1951, 1: 167 and Oldenberg 1909: 122–123.

40. Cf. ṚV.10.10.2cd, Yama to Yamī: *mahás putrāso ásurasya vīrā́ divó dhartā́ra urviyā́ pári khyan*. "'Sons of the great one, brave men (*vīrá-*) of the Asura, upholders of heaven, look around widely.'" Geldner (1951, 3: 134) suggests that the Asura here is the god Sky/Heaven, but he could also be Rudra, and his brave sons would thus be the Maruts. Cf. ṚV.1.162.1b and ṚV.7.93.8c, in which the Maruts (among other gods) are the subjects of the third-person plural injunctive *pári √khyā* ("to look around; to overlook").

41. Rudra (ṚV.1.114.1-3b, 10b, and ṚV.10.92.9b); Pūṣan (ṚV.1.106.4b), Indra (ṚV.1.125.3d), and Agni or poet (ṚV.8.19.10b).

42. The adjective *śuṣmín* and the term *vīrá* typically qualify Indra. At ṚV.6.2.11 (= ṚV.6.14.6), poets ask Agni to let them cross (*√tṝ*) difficulties to a good dwelling (*sukṣití*). Both Indra and Agni are variously placed in some relationship with the tribes, as signaled by the genitive plural *jánānām*. The term "dispenser" (*vidhartṛ́*) applies to Agni twice (ṚV.2.1.3d, ṚV.7.7.5b); and once to Indra (ṚV.8.70.2b); Varuṇa (ṚV.2.28.4a), Bhaga (ṚV.7.41.2b), and Soma (ṚV.9.47.4a).

43. Cf. Geldner 1951, 2: 232.

44. ṚV.1.73.3, to Agni: *devó ná yáḥ pṛthivíṃ viśvádhāyā upakṣéti hitámitro ná rā́jā, puraḥsádaḥ śarmasádo ná vīrā́ anavadyā́ pátijuṣṭeva nā́rī*. "The one who like a god (in heaven), nourishing all, dwells peacefully on earth, like a chieftain with alliances set in place, he is stationed in front, like brave men (*vīrá-*) stationed for protection, like a wife beyond reproach, pleasing to [her] husband."

45. Varcin is called a barbarian (*dāsá*) at ṚV.4.30.15a.

46. ṚV.2.30.4ab: *bṛ́haspate tápuṣā́śneva vidhya vṛ́kadvaraso ásurasya vīrā́n*.

47. In a stanza from the "Ten Kings' Battle" hymn (ṚV.7.18.1–25), Indra's manly acts (ṚV.7.18.14d: *víśvéd índrasya vīryā̀ kṛtā́ni*) appear to be the destruction of numerous enemy brave men of the Anu and Druhyu clans. On this stanza, see Geldner 1951, 2: 197.

48. For a detailed account of the term *mitrá* ("alliance, treaty"), see Brereton 1981 (esp. 29 in relation to the above stanza).

49. For discussion of the prefix *su-*, see Wackernagel AIG II, 1: 80–82 and Renou 1961: 176. Since it functions grammatically to construct possessive compounds, the "good *vīrá-*" do not appear to be a class of males or warriors qualitatively better than *vīrá-*. To highlight its poetic utility, *suvíra* often appears in conjunction with similar possessive compounds. See, e.g., ṚV.1.116.25b (*sugáva*), ṚV.2.3.4ab (*subhára*), ṚV.5.53.15ab (*sudevá*), ṚV.6.17.13c (*svāyudhá, suvájra*), ṚV.7.1.5ab (*svapatyá*), and ṚV.8.5.10b (*surátha*).

50. Wackernagel (AIG II, 2: 815, 834) translates *suvíra* as "heldenreich [rich in heroes]," "tapfere Männer besitzend [possessing brave men]," and "aus tapferen Männer bestehend [consisting of brave men]." Schlerath (1960: 124) offers "gute Mannen (Helden, Söhne) besitzend" and "Besitz guter Mannen." Renou (1952: 61, 118) translates *suvíra/suvírya* as "très viril, grande virilité" and "[richesse] faite de héros." The morphology is *suvírya* < *suvíra* < *vīrá* > *vīryà*.

51. E.g., ṚV.1.85.1d, ṚV.5.85.4d, ṚV.6.66.10cd, and ṚV.10.77.3c. Cf. ṚV.5.54.5, where the Maruts possess *vīryà*.

52. At ṚV.1.85.12d, the Maruts are instructed to provide "wealth associated with good men" (*rayíṃ no dhatta vṛṣaṇaḥ suvíram*). Cf. ṚV.5.57.7ab: *gómad áśvāvad ráthavat suvíraṃ candrávad rā́dho maruto dadā naḥ*. "Consisting of cows, horses, chariots, good men, and gold; such generosity you gave us, O Maruts."

53. See ṚV.1.91.19cd. Cf. ṚV.9.23.5c and ṚV.9.86.39c.

54. Cf. ṚV.1.31.10d, ṚV.7.1.4, and ṚV.8.84.9c.

55. While Geldner states that the dead man lies on his funeral pyre, Oberlies (1998: 300) thinks that the subsequent stanzas point to a burial ritual. See also Oldenberg (1912: 217–220) for a discussion of this stanza and the hymn in which it appears.

56. ṚV.10.18.7–8. See also Geldner (1951, 3: 153), who cites other scholars who suggest this.

57. Cf. ṚV.8.19.30: *prá só agne távotíbhiḥ suvírābhis tirate vā́jabharmabhiḥ, yásya tváṃ sakhyám āváraḥ*. "O Fire, he extends himself through your favors consisting of good brave men and bringing prizes, the one whose partnership you will choose." And also ṚV.5.20.4, to Agni: *itthā́ yáthā ta ūtáye sáhasāvan divédive, rā́yá ṛtā́ya sukrato góbhiḥ ṣyāma sadhamā́do vīraíḥ syāma sadhamā́daḥ*. "According to the way in which [we strive] for your favor day after day, O dominating one, for wealth and for truth, O one of good resolve, may we have a shared meal with cattle, may we have a shared meal with brave men." Cf. ṚV.4.23.2a, to Indra: *kó asya vīráḥ sadhamā́dam āpa*. "Which brave man has gained his shared meal?"

58. PIE**h*$_1$*su-h*$_1$*ri-*. See Mayrhofer EWA 2: 741.

59. See Mayrhofer EWA 1: 111–112.

60. Cf. ṚV.6.4.8cd, to Agni: *tā́ sūríbhyo gṛṇaté rāsi sumnám mádema śatáhimāḥ suvírāḥ*. "Grant these to patrons and benevolence to the singer. Being well manned, may we find exhilaration as ones destined for a hundred winters." Line d is repeated at ṚV.6.10.7b, ṚV.6.12.6d, ṚV.6.13.6d, ṚV.6.17.15b, and ṚV.6.24.10d.

61. This line is used exclusively by poets of the Gṛtsamāda family at ṚV.2.1.16d, ṚV.2.2.13d, ṚV.2.11.21d, ṚV.2.13.13d, ṚV.2.14.12d, ṚV.2.15.10d, ṚV.2.16-20.9d, ṚV.2.23.19d, ṚV.2.24.16d, ṚV.2.27.17d, ṚV.2.28.11d, ṚV.2.29.7d, ṚV.2.33.15d, ṚV.2.35.15d, ṚV.2.39.8d, ṚV.2.40.6d, ṚV.2.42-43.3d, and ṚV.9.86.48d. Cf. ṚV.2.4.9: *tváyā yáthā gṛtsamadā́so agne gúhā vanvánta úparā́ṁ abhí ṣyúḥ, suvírāso abhimātiṣā́haḥ smát sūríbhyo gṛṇaté tád váyo dhāḥ*. "O Fire, so that through you the Gṛtsamadas, winning in secret, should prevail over those nearby, being well manned, dominating hostile intentions, [then] establish this vitality to the singer along with the patrons."

62. ṚV.2.1.16b and ṚV.2.2.13d.

63. See ṚV.2.27.17d (a = *maghávan*), ṚV.2.28.11d (a = *maghávan*), ṚV.2.29.7d (a = *maghávan*), and ṚV.2.35.15d (b = *maghávan*). Cf. ṚV.1.73.5: *ví pṛ́kṣo agne maghávāno aśyur ví sūráyo dádato víśvam āyuḥ, saném vā́jaṃ samithéṣv aryó bhāgáṃ devéṣu śrávase dádhānāḥ*. "O Fire, may the munificent ones obtain nourishments, may the liberal patrons obtain a whole lifetime. May we win the prize in contests with a stranger, establishing for ourselves a share among the gods for fame." See also ṚV.2.6.4, to Agni: *sá bodhi sūrír maghávā vásupate vásudāvan, yuyodhy àsmád dvéṣāṃsi*. "Become a munificent patron, O lord of treasure, giving treasure. Keep hatreds away from us." And ṚV.10.81.6d: *ihā́smā́kam maghávā sūrír astu*. "For us here let there be a munificent patron."

64. See ṚV.5.42.8b and ṚV.8.26.7c.

65. Poets define themselves as *suvíra-* at, e.g., ṚV.1.116.25b: *asyá pátiḥ syāṃ sugávaḥ suvíraḥ*. "I would be lord of this [wealth], as one possessing good cattle [and] good men." ṚV.1.122.8b: *sácā sanema náhuṣaḥ suvírāḥ*. "Together we would win [wealth] from Nahuṣ, being well manned." ṚV.10.128.3d: *-áriṣṭāḥ syāma tanvà suvírāḥ*. "May we be unharmed in body, being well manned."

66. ṚV.1.85.1cd: *ródasī hí marútaś cakriré vṛdhé mádanti vīrā́ vidátheṣu ghṛ́ṣvayaḥ*. "Indeed, the Maruts made the world halves [Rodasī] grow strong. The lively brave men become exhilarated in the distribution ceremonies." ṚV.5.29.13: *kathó nú te pári carāṇi vidvā́n viryà̀ maghavan yā́ cakártha, yā́ co nú návyā kṛṇávaḥ śaviṣṭha préd u tā́ te vidátheṣu bravāma*. "As one who knows, how will I now encapsulate your manly acts, O munificent one, which you have performed, and which new ones you will perform now, O mightiest one? We will most surely pronounce these [acts] of yours in the distribution ceremonies." ṚV.6.24.2: *táturir vīró náryo vícetāḥ śrótā hávaṃ gṛṇatá urvyū́tiḥ, vásuḥ śáṃso narā́ṃ kārúdhāyā vājí stutó vidáthe dāti vā́jam*. "The triumphant brave man, manly, discerning, is one who hears the invocation of the singer, is one whose help is wide ranging. As the treasured eulogy of men, nursing the bard, praised as the prizewinner, he gives the prize in the distribution ceremony." At ṚV.1.117.25 (d = ṚV.2.12.15d and ṚV.8.48.14d), "well-manned" (*suvíra-*) poets proclaim the Aśvins' "manly acts" (*viryà-*) in the *vidátha*. Cf. ṚV.1.162.1, where poets proclaim the "manly acts" (*vīryà-*) of a race horse in the *vidátha*.

67. Cf. ṚV.9.68.10: *evā́ naḥ soma pariṣicyámāno váyo dádhac citrátamam pavasva, adveṣé dyā́vāpṛthiví huvema dévā dhattā́ rayím asmé suvíram*. "Thus, O Soma, being poured around, establishing for us most variegated vitality, purify yourself! May we invoke Heaven and Earth, who lack hatred. O gods, establish wealth consisting of good men among us." And also ṚV.10.77.7: *yá udṛ́ci yajñé adhvareṣṭhā́ marúdbhyo ná mā́nuṣo dádāśat, revát sá váyo dadhate suvíraṃ sá devā́nām ápi gopīthé astu*. "As the descendant of Manu, who is standing at the rite when the hymn is raised up in the sacrifice, he will ritually serve the Maruts. He will establish for himself vitality full of riches that consist of good men. Let him be in the protection of the gods."

68. Cf. ṚV.6.10.5: *nú naś citrám puruvā́jābhir ūtí ágne rayím maghávadbhyaś ca dhehi, yé rā́dhasā śrávasā cā́ty anyā́n suvíryebhiś cābhí sánti jánān*. "Now with [your] favors that bring many prizes, O Fire, establish variegated wealth for us and for our munificent ones, who, with generosity and fame, surpass the others, and, with manifold man-power, overcome the tribes."

69. *Vīrá-* are distinguished from benefactors at ṚV.1.140.12c: *asmā́kaṃ vīrā́ṁ utá no maghónaḥ-*. "Our brave men and our munificent ones."

70. ṚV.7.61.4cd: *áyan mā́sā áyajvanām avírāḥ prá yajñámanmā vṛjánaṃ tirāte*. "The months of the one who fails to sacrifice will pass without brave men. Setting [his] mind on sacrifice, he will prolong [his] community." Cf. also ṚV.3.16.1–5; *suvírya* features in stanzas 1 and 3–4, and in 5 the ritual participants ask Agni to protect them from failure in gaining brave men (*avíratā-*). For *avíratā*, see also ṚV.7.1.11b and 19a.

71. See, e.g., ṚV.2.32.4d: *dádātu vīráṃ śatádāyam ukthyàm*. "Let [Rākā] give a brave man with a hundred shares, worthy of recitations." Cf. ṚV.5.42.18: *sám aśvínor ávasā nū́tanena mayobhúvā supráṇītī gamema, ā́ no rayíṃ vahatam ótā vīrā́n ā́ víśvāny*

amṛtā saúbhagāni. "May we come together with the Aśvins' current help, which brings happiness and good guidance. Convey wealth to us here and brave men here, O two immortals, [and] all well-portioned things here." This stanza is repeated at ṚV.5.43.17, ṚV.5.76.5, and ṚV.5.77.5.

72. At ṚV.6.65.4ab, a mortal (*mártya*, see v.3) brave man gains a fortune (*rátna*) while worshipping Dawn.

73. Wackernagel (AIG II, 2: 815, 834) translates *suvírya* as "Heldenreichtum [hero riches or wealth]," "Besitz tapferer Männer [possession or property of brave men]," and "Heldenschar [hero band or troop]." Cf. Grassmann 1996: 1552 and Monier-Williams 1988: 1234. Geldner sometimes translates *suvírya* as "mastership" (Meisterschaft; e.g., 1951, 3: 54) or, at least once, as "heroism" (Heldentum; 1951, 2: 101).

74. See ṚV.6.47.12d, ṚV.9.89.7d, ṚV.9.95.5d, and ṚV.10.131.6d. Cf. ṚV.1.52.13b (*ṛṣvávīrasya bṛhatáḥ pátir bhūḥ*).

75. Cf. ṚV.8.6.23c: *utá prajā́ṃ suvíryam*. "Progeny and man-power."

76. Cf. ṚV.9.66.21: *ágne pávasva svápā asmé várcaḥ suvíryam, dádhad rayím máyi póṣam*. "O Fire, be purified as one of good work, [establishing] among us lustre, man-power; establishing wealth, a thriving in me."

77. ṚV.1.44.2. Cf. ṚV.6.70.5d and ṚV.8.23.27c.

78. ṚV.3.16.1. Cf. ṚV.7.4.6, in which Agni gives wealth in the form of man-power (*rāyáḥ suvíryasya*), and his worshippers ask not to be without brave men, cattle, and friends.

79. ṚV.1.74.9: *utá dyumát suvíryam bṛhád agne vivāsasi, devébhyo deva dāśúṣe*. See also ṚV.3.10.8b and ṚV.3.13.7c. Cf. ṚV.6.16.12c (*bṛhád agne suvíryam*).

80. See also ṚV.1.36.17ab: *agnír vavne suvíryam agníḥ káṇvāya saúbhagam*. "Fire has won man-power, Fire [has won] good prosperity for Kaṇva." ṚV.1.94.2b: *anarvā́ kṣeti dádhate suvíryam*. "Without contest, he [Fire] dwells peacefully. He will establish man-power." ṚV.1.127.11d–g, to Agni: *máhi śaviṣṭha nas kṛdhi saṃcákṣe bhujé asyaí, máhi stotṛ́bhyo maghavan suvíryam máthīr ugró ná śávasā*. "Create great (man-power) for us to survey, O mightiest one, for our enjoyment here. Capture great man-power for the praisers, O munificent one, like a powerful one with might." ṚV.6.8.6: *asmā́kam agne maghávatsu dhārayā́nāmi kṣatrám ajáraṃ suvíryam,vayáṃ jayema śatínaṃ sahasríṇaṃ vaíśvānara vā́jam agne távotíbhiḥ*. "O Fire, uphold among our munificent ones unbending dominion, undecaying man-power. May we conquer the prize a hundredfold, a thousandfold, O Fire common to all men, through your favors."

81. ṚV.8.23.12b: *rayíṃ rāsva suvíryam*. Cf. ṚV.5.13.5c (= ṚV.8.98.12c): *sá no rāsva suvíryam*. See ṚV.3.16.3ab: *sá tváṃ no rāyáḥ śiśīhi míḍhvo agne suvíryasya*. "This one, you, hone us for wealth, man-power, O benefactor, O Fire."

82. Cf. ṚV.9.8.1-2, where *sóma* juices strengthen Indra's *vīryà* and establish *suvírya* for the ritual participants. For *sóma* and *suvírya*, see also ṚV.9.11.9ab, ṚV.9.13.4-5, ṚV.9.43.6, ṚV.9.63.1, ṚV.9.65.5a, and ṚV.9.69.8ab. See also ṚV.9.20.7c, ṚV.9.62.30c, ṚV.9.66.27c, and ṚV.9.67.19c, which all state: *dádhat stotré suvíryam*. "For the praiser establish man-power." Cf. ṚV.9.40.5b and ṚV.9.45.6c.

83. For *suvírya* and *sváśva*, see ṚV.1.40.2c, ṚV.1.93.2cd, ṚV.3.26.3c, and ṚV.8.12.33a. Cf. ṚV.5.6.10cd, ṚV.8.22.18, ṚV.8.31.18, and ṚV.8.46.5a. See also ṚV.3.55.18ab: *vīrásya*

nú svàśvyaṃ janāsaḥ prá nú vocāma vidúr asya devā́ḥ. "We will now proclaim the good horses of the brave man (*vīrá*), O peoples: The gods know of it." Cf. also ṚV.5.27.6.

84. Cf. ṚV.8.3.9a: *tát tvā yāmi suvíryaṃ*. "I implore of you this man-power." ṚV.8.3.11b: *rayíṃ yā́mi suvíryam*. "I implore wealth, man-power."

85. Pinault (2002a: 201) has independently made a similar assessment about *vīrá* and wealth.

86. See, e.g., ṚV.4.36.9ab, to Ṛbhus: *ihá prajā́m ihá rayíṃ rárāṇā ihá śrávo vīrávat takṣatā naḥ*. "Giving progeny here, wealth here, fashion for us here fame that comes from having brave men." On many occasions *yáśas* ("renown") also appears in conjunction with *vīrávant* ("characterized by [or consisting of] brave men"). See ṚV.4.32.12c, ṚV.5.79.6a, ṚV.7.15.12a, ṚV.8.23.21c, ṚV.8.103.9a, ṚV.9.61.26c, ṚV.9.106.13c, and ṚV.10.36.10c (see also ṚV.1.1.3c: *yaśásaṃ vīrávattamam*). All these lines relate to wealth in some form or another, and in the majority of its appearances *vīrávant* qualifes various types of wealth. See, e.g., ṚV.1.12.11c, ṚV.2.11.13d, ṚV.7.15.5b, ṚV.7.75.8a, ṚV.9.9.9b, ṚV.9.42.6a, ṚV.9.63.18b, ṚV.9.97.21d, and ṚV.10.36.13c. Cf. also ṚV.1.92.8 and ṚV.2.3.5d.

87. See, e.g., ṚV.6.59.7: *índrāgni ā́ hí tanvaté náro dhánvāni bāhvóḥ, mā́ no asmín mahādhané párā varktaṃ gáviṣṭiṣu*. "O Indra and Fire, because men are here drawing their bows in [their] arms, do not twist away from us in this [battle] for great stakes, in [our] quests for cattle."

88. Cf. ṚV.5.41.9b: *vásavo ná vīrā́ḥ*, "like treasured brave men," and ṚV.8.40.9d: *vásvo vīrásyāpṛ́caḥ-*, "mixings of treasure, of a brave man."

89. The term *nyṛ̀ṣṭa* ("bursting, overflowing") and *vásu* also appear together at ṚV.4.20.6d, ṚV.10.42.2c, and ṚV.10.108.7b. We recall at ṚV.4.18.5b that Indra is "bursting with manliness" (*vīryèṇā nyṛ̀ṣṭam*).

90. Cf. ṚV.10.36.11c: *yáthā vásu vīrájātaṃ náśāmahai*. "So that we will obtain the treasure produced by brave men."

91. See also ṚV.8.86.4a: *vīráṃ dhanasā́m*. "A brave man winning stakes."

92. ṚV.8.2.21ab: *vidmā́ hy àsya vīrásya bhūridā́varīṃ sumatím*. "Indeed, we know the abundant-giving, good intention of him, the brave man."

93. Cf. ṚV.3.12.9: *índrāgnī rocanā́ diváḥ pári vā́jeṣu bhūṣathaḥ, tád vāṃ ceti prá vīryàm*. "O Indra and Agni, you encapsulated the lights of heaven in the prizes: This manliness of yours has been made apparent." ṚV.3.25.2: *agníḥ sanoti vīryà̀ṇi vidvā́n sanóti vā́jam amṛ́tāya bhū́ṣan, sá no devā́m̐ éhá vahā purukṣo*. "Fire wins manly powers as the one who knows. He wins the prize, being present for immortality [or the deathless one]. Convey the gods here to us, O you of many cattle."

94. Cf. ṚV.1.30.5, where Indra is praised as a brave man and a "lord of generosities" (voc. *rādhānām pate*). See also ṚV.1.40.3, wherein Bṛhaspati and the goddess Sūnṛtā ("Liberality") are instructed to go toward "the manly brave man whose generosity is fivefold" (*áchā vīráṃ náryam paṅktírādhasaṃ*).

95. Oberlies (1999: 169) states that Ṛgvedic kingship is also defined by conquest and generosity.

96. For √*nīḷay/nīḍay* and consideration of this stanza, see Jamison 1983: 84–85.

97. Cf. ṚV.6.45.26, to Indra: *dūṇā́śaṃ sakhyáṃ táva gaúr asi vīra gavyaté, áśvo aśvāyaté bhava*. "Your partnership is difficult to obtain. You are the cow for the one who seeks cattle, O brave man. Become the horse for the one who seeks horses."

98. Cf. ṚV.2.24.15c: *vīréṣu vīrā́ṁ úpa pṛṅdhi nas tváṃ*. "Combine our brave men among [your] brave men."

99. The subject of the verb *á √tan* ("to stretch over, across") in line c is unclear. It may be the "atmosphere" (*antárikṣam*) as Soma stretches over it in the preceding stanza (ṚV.1.91.22c). Cf. Oldenberg 1909: 91 and Geldner 1951, 1: 117.

100. See, e.g., ṚV.1.170.5a, ṚV.2.1.10b, ṚV.4.20.8a, ṚV.4.21.4a, ṚV.7.4.6b, ṚV.8.25.20c, ṚV.8.44.18a, ṚV.8.71.8c, and 13b.

101. Cf. ṚV.1.93.4: *ágnīṣomā céti tád vīryàṃ vāṃ yád ámuṣṇītam avasám paṇíṃ gā́ḥ, ávātiratam bṛ́sayasya śéṣó 'vindataṃ jyótir ékam bahúbhyaḥ*. "O Fire and Soma, this manly act of you two has been perceived, since you stole from the miser [his] sustenance, [his] cows. The two of you brought low the posterity of Bṛsaya. You found the single light for the many."

102. See Grassmann 1996: 689, Monier-Williams 1988: 33, and Mayrhofer EWA1: 794.

103. Cf. ṚV.9.8.1: *eté sómā abhí priyám índrasya kā́mam akṣaran, várdhanto asya vīryàm*. "These *sóma* pressings flowed toward the beloved desire of Indra, strengthening his manliness (*vīryà*)." See also ṚV.10.30.4, where honey-filled waters (*mádhumatīr apáḥ*-) strengthen (*√vṛdh*) Indra for manliness (*vīryà*). ṚV.6.19.1c: *asmadryàg vāvṛdhe vīryā̀ya–*. "In our direction he has been strengthened for manliness (*vīryà*)." ṚV.8.24.16c: *evā́ hí vīrá stávate sadā́vṛdhaḥ*. "For indeed the brave man is praised, being one who always strengthens." And ṚV.1.118.2d, where the Aśvins are instructed to strengthen (*√vṛdh*) a brave man (*vardháyatam aśvinā vīrám asmé*). Cf. also the obscure ṚV.10.73.1cd: *ávardhann índram marútaś cid átra mātā́ yád vīráṃ dadhánad dhániṣṭhā*. "Even the Maruts strengthened Indra here, when the fastest running/most murderous mother set the brave man (*vīrá*) to running." Mayrhofer (EWA1: 773) refers to *dadhánad dhániṣṭhā* as a "Figura etymologica" from *√dhan* ("to run"). However, it could also be read as *(d)hániṣṭha* from *√han* ("to smash"; Jamison, pers. comm., March 2004).

104. See Mayrhofer EWA2: 540. See also ṚV.6.50.6: *abhí tyáṃ vīráṃ gírvaṇasam arcéndram bráhmaṇā jaritar návena, śrávad íd dhávam úpa ca stávāno rā́sad vā́jāṁ úpa mahó gṛṇānáḥ*. "Chant out to this brave man (*vīrá*) who covets songs, to Indra with a new sacred formulation, O singer. He will surely hear the invocation, and, being praised, he will bestow prizes. He is greatly sung about."

105. See, e.g., Schmitt 1967: 61–102.

106. See also ṚV.2.13.11ab and ṚV.2.21.3d (both cited above).

107. Cf. ṚV.1.154.1a: *víṣṇor nú kaṃ vīryā̀ṇi prá vocam*. "Indeed, I will now proclaim Viṣṇu's manly acts." And ṚV.1.154.2a: *prá tád víṣṇu stavate vīryèṇa*. "Thus, Viṣṇu will be praised forth due to [his] manliness." See also ṚV.6.59.1: *prá nú vocā sutéṣu vāṃ vīryā̀ yā́ni cakráthuḥ, hatā́so vām pitáro deváśatrava índrāgnī jívatho yuvám*. "At the pressed [*sóma* offerings], I will now proclaim your manly acts [*vīryà*-], which the two of you have performed. Your fathers whose rivals were gods were destroyed. O Indra and Fire, the two of you live on."

108. Cf. ṚV.5.42.6, where *prá √brū* ("to pronounce") features with *vīryà*. And also ṚV.10.39.5ab, to Aśvins: *purāṇā́ vāṃ vīryā̀ prá bravā jáné 'tho hāsathur bhiṣájā mayobhúvā*. "I will pronounce the ancient manly acts of you two among the tribe, and thus you were healers who bring happiness."

109. See Geldner 1951, 2: 130 for the syntax and grammar of line d. On the transitive nature of causative *prá √śru*, see Jamison 1983: 175–177.

110. It is perhaps for this reason that an early poet states at ṚV.5.54.1d: *dyumnáśravase máhi nṛmṇám arcata*. "For the ones who possess majestic fame [= Maruts], chant [their] great manhood." Cf. ṚV.1.62.1d: *-árcāmārkáṃ náre víśrutāya*. "We chant a chant to the widely famed man [Indra]." At ṚV.3.51.4b, ritual participants chant to Indra as a brave man. And ṚV.8.46.14ab, to Indra: *abhí vo vīrám ándhaso mádeṣu gāya, girā́ mahā́ vícetasam*. "When in the exhilarations of your plant, sing out to the brave man, with a great song to the discerning one." Cf. ṚV.6.21.1b, in which Indra is a brave man "worthy to be invoked [*hávya*]."

111. For the initial hemistich, see Klein 1985, 1: 205. For problematic *oṇí*, see Mayrhofer EWA1: 279.

112. ṚV.4.29.2d: *suṣvāṇébhir mádati sáṃ ha vīraíḥ*. At ṚV.4.25.6, as a *vīrá*, Indra makes the cooked food of a "presser" his alone, and he smashes the "non-presser." On "pressers" and "non-pressers," see Whitaker 2007.

113. ṚV.6.44.13a. For the inverse image, see ṚV.8.32.24, to Indra: *ádhvaryav ā́ tú hí ṣiñcá sómaṃ vīrā́ya śipríṇe, bhárā sutásya pītáye*. "O Adhvaryu, surely pour out *sóma* here for the mustached brave man. Bring of the pressed [*sóma*] [for him] to drink." And ṚV.2.14.1: *ádhvaryavo bháraténdrāya sómam ā́matrebhiḥ siñcatā mádyam ándhaḥ, kāmí hí vīráḥ sádam asya pītíṃ juhóta vṛ́ṣṇe tád íd eśá vaṣṭi*. "Adhvaryus, bring *sóma* to Indra. With tankards, pour here the exhilarating plant, since the brave man is always desirous of his drink. Offer to the bull. Indeed, it is this that he wishes."

114. ṚV.6.23.3c: *kártā vīrā́ya súṣvaya ulokáṃ*, and ṚV.6.23.4c: *kártā vīráṃ náryaṃ sárvavīraṃ*, respectively. I follow Geldner's (1951, 2: 122) syntax and grammar for line 4c, but not his translation of *sárvavīram* as "zum Vater von lauter Söhnen." Like *suvíra/suvírya*, the compound *sárvavīra* typically qualifies *rayí* ("wealth") or ritual participants who seek to control men. It could only secondarily refer to a father of faultless sons.

115. ṚV.2.26.2a: *yájasva vīra*.

116. ṚV.7.1.15c.

117. ṚV.7.42.4. At ṚV.8.23.14b, Agni is invoked as a brave man and clan lord (voc. *vīra viśpate*).

118. A metaphorically opaque stanza from a riddle hymn states that *vīrá-* ritually cook a speckled young bullock and a fat ram. ṚV.1.164.43c: *ukṣā́ṇam pṛ́śnim apacanta vīrā́ḥ-*. See also ṚV.10.27.17a, which is also part of an obscure hymn.

119. At ṚV.6.10.3a, a poet-priest who serves Agni "is swollen with fame among mortals" (*pīpā́ya sá śrávasā mártyeṣu*). Cf. ṚV.3.19.5d, where Agni is commanded to "establish manifold fame upon our bodies" (*ádhi śrávāṃsi dhehi nas tanū́ṣu*).

120. Cf. ṚV.8.6.41c: *índra coṣkūyáse vásu*. "O Indra, you repeatedly stoke the treasure." See also ṚV.1.33.3cd, where a poet asks Indra not to be a miser (*paṇí*) as he "keeps stoking an abundant asset" (*coṣkūyámāṇa indra bhū́ri vāmám*). For *√sku/skav*, see Mayrhofer EWA2: 751.

121. ṚV.8.47.12cd: *gáve ca bhadráṃ dhenáve vīrā́ya ca śravasyaté*.

122. For Indra's love of songs, see ṚV.10.111.1cd: *índraṃ satyaír érayāmā kṛtébhiḥ sá hí vīró girvaṇasyur vídānaḥ*. "We will set Indra in motion here with real acts, for he is a

brave man known to long for songs." And ṚV.6.45.13a, to Indra: "O brave man who covets songs" (voc. *vīra girvaṇaḥ*). Cf. ṚV.8.54.1: *etát ta indra vīryàṃ gīrbhír gr̥ṇánti kārávaḥ, té stóbhanta úrjam āvan ghr̥taścútam paurā́so nakṣan dhītíbhiḥ*. "This manliness of yours, O Indra, the bards sing with songs. Sounding out, they aided the ghee-dripping invigoration. The Pauras will approach with their insights." At ṚV.6.21.8ab, Indra is instructed to listen to the current poet create a sacred formulation (*bráhman*), and is called "O brave man, who nurses the bard(s)" (voc. *vīra kārudhāyas*).

123. Cf. Geldner 1951, 3: 173.

124. Cf. ṚV.6.18.7, to Indra: *sá majmánā jánima mā́nuṣāṇām ámartyena nā́mnāti prá sarsre, sá dyumnéna sá śávasotá rāyā́ sá vīryèṇa nr̥tamaḥ sámokāḥ*. "Through greatness, through [his] immortal name, he has repeatedly expanded himself beyond the race of Manu's descendants. This one, best among men, shares a dwelling due to [his] majesty, might, wealth, and manliness." See also ṚV.2.20.6a: *sá ha śrutá índro nā́ma deváḥ-*. "To be sure, this one, the god famed as Indra by name . . ."

125. Cf. ṚV.8.15.8ab: *táva dyaúr indra paúṃsyam pr̥thiví vardhati śrávaḥ*. "O Indra, Heaven and Earth strengthen your masculinity, [your] fame." See also ṚV.1.160.5.

126. ṚV.1.126.2.

127. The grammar of line d is unclear. Cf. Oldenberg 1912: 300, Geldner 1951, 3: 294, and Klein 1985, 1: 301.

128. Cf. ṚV.4.31.15: *asmā́kam uttamā́ṃ kr̥dhi śrávo devéṣu sūrya, várṣiṣṭhaṃ dyā́m ivopári*. "Make our fame the highest among the gods, O Sun, the very best, as if beyond heaven." See also ṚV.5.18.5, where Agni is asked to make "heavenly great fame that reaches aloft" (cd: *dyumád agne máhi śrávo br̥hát kr̥dhi*). Cf. ṚV.5.35.8, which describes ritual participants establishing their fame in heaven (d: *diví śrávo dadhīmahi*), and ṚV.1.91.18d.

129. See also ṚV.6.26.7: *ahā́ṃ caná tát sūríbhir ānaśyāṃ táva jyā́ya indra sumnám ójaḥ, tváyā yát stávante sadhavīra vīrā́s tivárūthena náhuṣā śaviṣṭha*. "May I also, along with the patrons, obtain this, your superior grace, your power, O Indra, so that our brave men will be praised along with you, O you who are accompanied by brave men, along with Nahuṣ who provides threefold defense, O mightiest one." Lubotsky (1997: 1589) classifies *stávante* as a middle-voice present-tense verb, yet it could also be subjunctive.

130. I take my lead here from Foucault 1972, 1977; Bourdieu 1977, 2001; and recent anthropological studies on masculinity and violence. See Jankowski 1991, Spergel 1995, and Rosenthal 2000.

CHAPTER 3

1. The root √*śū* can also mean "to thrive, prosper". See Mayrhofer EWA 2: 623–624.

2. Like *vīrá*, the term *śū́ra* is frequently translated as "warrior," "fighter," or "hero." See, e.g., Grassmann 1996 [1873]; Griffith 1973 [1889–]; Monier-Williams 1988 [1899]; Geldner 1951 [1923]; and Mayrhofer EWA 2: 650.

3. In the *Ṛgveda*, *śávas* appears 177 times (outside of compounds) and relates to Indra about 65 percent of the time, to Agni 15 percent, to the Maruts 10 percent, and to

miscellaneous deities 10 percent. *Śávas* has an exact cognate in Avestan, *sauuah*, which, according to Mayrhofer (EWA 2: 623–624), means *Vorteil* ("advantage, benefit, profit, gain"), *Nutzen* ("use, utility, returns"), and *Wohlfahrt* ("welfare").

4. Cf. ṚV.7.1.10: *imé náro vṛtrahátyeṣu śū́rā víśvā ádevīr abhí santu māyā́ḥ, yé me dhíyam panáyanta praśastā́m.* "Let these men, champions [*śū́ra-*] in the smashing of Vṛtra [or obstacles], be superior to all the godless crafty ones; these ones who will admire my celebrated insight."

5. Cf. ṚV.1.64.13ab: *prá nū́ sá mártaḥ śávasā jánāṁ áti tasthaú va ūtí́ maruto yám ā́vata.* "Now this mortal stood out beyond the tribes due to [his] might, the one whom you helped with a favor, O Maruts." See also ṚV.1.100.12c, in which Indra's worth is defined in physical terms as he "belongs to the five tribes due to [his] might" (*śávasā pā́ñcajanyaḥ-*); and ṚV.1.132.5, to Indra: *sáṃ yáj jánān krátubhiḥ śū́ra īkṣáyad dháne hité taruṣanta śravasyávaḥ prá yakṣanta śravasyávaḥ, tásmā ā́yuḥ prajā́vad íd bā́dhe arcanty ójasā, índra okyàṃ didhiṣanta dhītáyo devā́ṁ áchā ná dhītáyaḥ.* "When the champion makes the tribes take notice through resolute acts, the fame seekers will surpass when the prize is established, the fame seekers will display themselves. They surely chant to him to impel a lifetime full of progeny with power. The insights wish to establish for themselves an abode in Indra, just as the insights go to the gods."

6. A late poet metaphorically calls a gambler's dice "army leader" at ṚV.10.34.12ab: *yó vaḥ senānír maható gaṇásya rā́jā vrā́tasya prathamó babhū́va.* "The one that became the army leader of your great horde, the foremost chieftain of the troop." At ṚV.10.84.2b, "rage" (*manyú*) is called the army leader (*senānī́*) and dominating (*sáhuri*).

7. ṚV.1.173.5ab. For *sátvan*, see Mayrhofer EWA 2: 691. The term is often translated as "warrior," and it may derive from the present participle *sánt* ("real, true, effective, good"), though this is by no means certain.

8. ṚV.7.20.5cd: *prá yáḥ senānír ádha nṛ́bhyo ástīnāḥ sátvā gavéṣaṇaḥ sá dhṛṣṇúḥ.* "The one who [goes] forth [as] the army leader for men, that one is a staunch true man, the daring seeker of cattle."

9. For *sátvan* and *śū́ra*, see ṚV.1.133.6fg: *ápūruṣaghno apratīta śūra sátvabhis trisaptaíḥ śū́ra sátvabhiḥ*, ṚV.8.45.3b: *śū́ra ā́jati sátvabhiḥ*, and ṚV.9.3.4b: *śū́ro yánn iva sátvabhiḥ.*

10. Cf. ṚV.9.36.6c, to Soma: *vīrayúḥ śavasas pate.*

11. ṚV.8.2.36b: *hántā vṛtráṃ nṛ́bhiḥ śū́raḥ.*

12. See ṚV.4.38.2d: *nṛpátiṃ ná śū́ram.* Cf. ṚV.7.30.1cd.

13. See ṚV.1.175.3, ṚV.1.178.3, ṚV.5.63.5, ṚV.8.31.15ab, ṚV.9.15.1b, and ṚV.9.94.3b. A *śū́ra* is also said to be an "archer" or "hurler" (*ástṛ*) at ṚV.1.70.11a, ṚV.4.36.6b, and ṚV.6.64.3c.

14. See Heesterman 1957: 127–139. For a detailed study of chariots in Vedic culture, see Sparreboom 1985.

15. At ṚV.2.39.2a, the Aśvins are "like two chariot-driving brave men" (*rathyèva vīrā́-*). Cf. ṚV.5.30.1ab: *kvà syá vīráḥ kó apaśyad índraṃ sukháratham íyamānaṃ háribhyām.* "Where is this brave man? Who has seen Indra of a well-naved chariot, racing with two tawny horses." At ṚV.3.60.4, the Ṛbhus appear to be Indra's charioteers and perform "manly acts" (*vīryà-*).

16. See ṚV.8.2.25c, where "*sóma* is for the brave man, the champion" (*sómaṃ vīrā́ya śū́rāya*). The compound *śū́ravīra* appears at AVŚ.8.5.1 (= AVP.16.27.1).

17. ṚV.4.21.1.

18. ṚV.1.104.4b. This line appears in a problematic stanza, and its exact contextual meaning is unclear.

19. Cf. ṚV.8.33.16c, to Indra: *yó asmā́n vīrá ā́nayat*. "The brave man who led us." Also see ṚV.3.56.8, where an Asura's three *vīrá-* rule (*√rāj*).

20. I follow Grassmann ((1996 [1873]: 1644) and Lubotsky (1997: 1627) in translating *párā √han* here as a second-person singular imperfect, though it could also be third person, as Geldner (1951, 1: 435) renders it. See also ṚV.1.84.9cd: *ugráṃ tát patyate śáva índro aṅgá*. "He lords over powerful might [*śávas*]: he indeed is Indra." Cf. ṚV.8.1.21b: *ugrám ugréṇa śávasā*.

21. Cf. ṚV.7.84.4, ṚV.9.1.10, and ṚV.10.42.2d, in which poets also expect that a *śū́ra* will share the spoils of war. See also ṚV.1.127.11d–g, to Agni.

22. Cf. ṚV.10.148.4b, to Indra: *dā́ nṛ́bhyo nṛṇā́ṃ śūra śávaḥ*.

23. Note the use of the vocative *śavasas pate/ī* to Indra at ṚV.1.11.2b, ṚV.1.131.4e, ṚV.4.47.3b (du. Vāyu and Indra), ṚV.5.35.5d, ṚV.8.6.21a, ṚV.8.45.20b, ṚV.8.90.5b, and ṚV.8.97.6b. To Agni at ṚV.5.6.9d; to Soma at ṚV.9.36.6c. Indra is called *putra śavasaḥ* ("son of might") at ṚV.8.92.14a (cf. ṚV.8.90.2d: *putrásya śávaso maháḥ*). The Ṛbhus are called "grandsons of might" (*śavaso napātaḥ*) at ṚV.1.161.14d, ṚV.4.34.6a, ṚV.4.35.1a, ṚV.4.35.8c, and ṚV.4.37.4c. Cf. ṚV.10.23.2c (*ṛbhúr vā́ja ṛbhukṣā́ḥ patyate śávaḥ-*). Also ṚV.1.110.7a: *ṛbhúr na índraḥ śávasā návīyān*. "The Craftsman [has become] a newer Indra for us due to [his] might." And ṚV.8.25.5a, Mitra and Varuṇa are "two grandsons of great might" (*nápātā śávaso maháḥ*). See also ṚV.1.145.1d, where Agni is called "the lord of the prize, of ferocious might" (*sá vā́jasya śávasaḥ śuṣmíṇas pátiḥ*).

24. For the grammar of this stanza, see Klein 1985, 1: 172–173. For *éva-*, see Mayrhofer EWA1: 102. I have also adopted the suggestions of Joel Brereton (pers. comm., January 2005).

25. For *carṣaṇí*, see Mayrhofer EWA1: 538, Thieme 1967, and Proferes 2007: 14–15.

26. ṚV.2.22.4: *táva tyán náryaṃ nṛtó 'pa indra prathamám pūrvyáṃ diví pravā́cyaṃ kṛtám, yád devásya śávasā prā́riṇā ásuṃ riṇánn apáḥ, bhúvad víśvam abhy ā́devam ójasā vidā́d ū́rjaṃ śatákratur vidā́d íṣam*. "O dancer, this is your manly deed, O Indra, foremost, first in the day [or heaven], the act to be proclaimed, which due to the might of a god you let life flow forth, in letting the waters flow free. He will become superior to all who are devoid of their god through [his] power. The one of a hundred resolves will find invigoration. He will find refreshment." Cf. ṚV.5.11.5cd, ṚV.6.32.5a, and ṚV.8.3.10ab.

27. For more detailed discussions of Vṛtra's character, see Schmidt 1968, Kuiper 1983, Lahiri 1984, and Watkins 1995.

28. For *dhṛṣṇú* and *śávas*, see also ṚV.1.54.2c, ṚV.1.56.4c, and ṚV.1.167.9c. Cf. ṚV.1.84.2b, where Indra possesses "*śávas* that is unable to be dared against" (*ápratidhṛṣṭaśavas*), and ṚV.4.22.5cd.

29. See also ṚV.8.3.20cd: *nír antárikṣād adhamo mahā́m áhiṃ, kṛṣé tád indra paúṃsyam*. "From the atmosphere you have blown away the great serpent. You have

performed this masculine act, O Indra." Cf. ṚV.8.32.3c. See also ṚV.8.7.23c, where the Maruts defeat Vṛtra by "performing a bullish masculine act" (*cakrāṇā́ vṛ́ṣṇi paúṃsyam*).

30. The term *śávas* does not exclusively signify Indra's power to defeat Vṛtra. See, e.g., ṚV.8.62.8: *gṛṇé tád indra te śáva upamáṃ devátātaye, yád dháṃsi vṛtrám ójasā śacīpate bhadrā́ índrasya rātáyaḥ*. "O Indra, I sing this highest might [*śávas*] of yours for the divine realm, when you smash Vṛtra through [your] power [*ójas*], O capable lord. Auspicious are Indra's gifts." Cf. *sáhasā* (ṚV.1.23.9b), *ójasā* (ṚV.1.80.1–2; cf. ṚV.3.47.3d), *tavásā* (ṚV.3.30.8d), and *dhṛṣatā́* (ṚV.10.111.6c). See also ṚV.1.80.1–16. Cf. ṚV.1.52.10d: *made sutásya śávasābhinac chíraḥ*, ṚV.5.52.9d: *ádrim bhindanty ójasā*, ṚV.8.33.7c: *ayáṃ yáḥ púro vibhinátty ójasā*, and ṚV.8.93.2b: *bibhéda bāhvòjasā*.

31. See ṚV.10.43.4, where *sóma* juices blaze forth through might (*śávas*) and find the sun, the Āryan light, for Manu.

32. For *vájra* and *śávas*, see also ṚV.1.80.13 and ṚV.10.99.1cd.

33. It is noteworthy that ṚV.6.18.9c, ṚV.6.22.9c, and ṚV.6.45.18a all begin *dhiṣvá vájram*, whereas ṚV.2.11.18a has *dhiṣvā́ śávaḥ*.

34. This is also true of the Maruts, who are *vīrá-*, yet note their standing as *śū́ra-* and their possession of *śávas* when they confront Vṛtra in the following two lines from the same hymn. ṚV.1.64.8d: *sám ít sabā́dhaḥ śávasāhimanyavaḥ*. "These ones whose rage rivals the serpent's due to [their] might come together eagerly." And ṚV.1.64.9b: *śūrāḥ śávasāhimanyavaḥ*. "O champions, whose rage rivals the serpent's due to [their] might [*śávas*]."

35. ṚV.6.14.4: *agnír apsā́m ṛtīṣáhaṃ vīráṃ dadāti sátpatim, yásya trásanti śávasaḥ saṃcákṣi śátravo bhiyā́*. "Fire gives a brave man who is winning the waters, dominating in the attack, lord of the settlement, whose enemies tremble from fear at the sight of [his] might." For *sátpati-* <**sáts-pati-* (*~sádas-*), see Mayrhofer EWA2: 690. However, others have advocated that *sát* could be here a shortened form of *sátvan*, and thus a *sátpati* would be a "lord of true men." This is interesting, as the terms *śū́ra*, *sátvan*, and *sátpati* contextually overlap.

36. See ṚV.6.13.3a, to Agni: *sá sátpatiḥ śávasā hanti vṛtrám*. "This lord of the settlement smashes Vṛtra due to [his] might." Cf. ṚV.6.46.1c: *tvā́ṃ vṛtréṣv indra sátpatiṃ náras*. "It is you, O Indra, as the lord of the settlement, that men [invoke] amid obstacles."

37. ṚV.2.39.2 and ṚV.5.30.1 are the only examples where *vīrá-* are explicitly associated with chariots.

38. Cf. McGrath 2004 on the use of the terms *vīra* and *śūra* in the *Mahābhārata*.

39. ṚV.1.32.1, ṚV.1.103.7, ṚV.2.11.5, and ṚV.3.33.7. Geldner (1951, 3: 336) thinks that in the following stanza, the two individuals are Indra and Vṛtra. ṚV.10.113.7: *yā́ vīryā̀ṇi prathamā́ni kártvā mahitvébhir yátamānau samīyátuḥ, dhvāntáṃ támo 'va dadhvase hatá índro mahnā́ pūrváhūtāv apatyata*. "The two [Indra and Vṛtra?] who went in unison after manly acts [*vīryà-*], which are foremost to be performed, are arranging themselves due to [their] great qualities/powers. Smoky darkness dusted down on the smashed one. Indra was lord due to [his] greatness at the first invocation."

40. For *śū́ra* and *vīryà*, see ṚV.2.30.10, ṚV.8.61.18, and ṚV.10.112.1.

41. ṚV.4.50.7ab.

42. Cf. ṚV.1.103.7ab: *tád indra préva vīryàṃ cakartha yát sasántaṃ vájreṇābodhayó 'him*. "O Indra, you performed this manly act [*vīryà*], as it were, when you 'awakened' the sleeping serpent with your mace." For a brief discussion on this poetic pun, see Jamison (1991: 269–270 n. 232), who argues that Indra's "awakening" of Vṛtra ironically indicates the exact opposite: he puts Vṛtra "to sleep." See also Jamison 1982/83: 10–12.

43. Cf. Jamison 1982/83: "The word *vīryà-* is usually reserved for the major familiar deeds of Indra, not for a minor and preliminary act in one of them" (11).

44. At ṚV.6.32.1, a poet offers kind words to Indra as the "great brave man, energetic, enduring" (*mahé vīrā́ya taváse turā́ya*), though we also note that the poet underscores Indra's standing over other warriors as he "controls brave men and livestock" (*virapśíne*). The term *virapśín* appears to be a collocation of **vīra-pśv-* < **vīrá-paśú*. See Mayrhofer EWA 2: 559. Cf. Watkins (1995: 42ff.), who discusses the Indo-European merism "PROTECT (**pah$_2$-*) MEN (**u̯ih$_x$ro-*) (and) LIVESTOCK (**pek̑u-*)". The development of *ví √rapś* ("to overflow") is secondary.

45. At ṚV.7.32.6, Indra is called "smasher of Vṛtra" (voc. *vṛtrahan*) when he swells or strengthens (√*śū*) a human *vīrá* who prepares the god's *sóma*. Cf. ṚV.7.20.2ab: *hántā vṛtrám índraḥ śū́śuvānaḥ prā́vīn nú vīró jaritā́ram ūtí*. "Smasher of Vṛtra, Indra, swelling up, as a brave man he has now aided the singer with help." Note in the first line that *hántā vṛtrám* and √*śū* both represent the semantics of a *śū́ra*. Given the 117 appearances of Indra's common epithet *vṛtrahán*, these few examples do not appear to be defining the role of a *vīrá* in relation to Vṛtra in any substantial way. For *vṛtrahán* and *vīryà*, see ṚV.3.54.15c and ṚV.9.113.1b. Cf. ṚV.6.36.2d (*vṛtrahátya-*).

46. ṚV.1.32.12c: *ájayo gā́ ájayaḥ śū́ra sómam*. "You conquered the cows, O champion, you conquered *sóma*." See also ṚV.10.103.5, where Indra holds absolute dominance, stands on his victorious chariot, and is called a "prominent warrior" (*právīraḥ*) and "superior to brave men, superior to true men" (*abhívīro abhísatvā*). Since they are *hapax legomena*, the forms *právīra*, *abhívīra*, and *abhísatvan* are unclear in meaning. Geldner (1951, 3: 320) translates *právīra* as "ein hervorragender Held" and Wackernagel (AIG II, 1: 257) supplies "großer Held." For *abhívīra* and *abhísatvan*, Geldner offers "jedem Helden über, jedem Krieger über." In contrast, Wacknernagel (AIG II, 1: 282, 312) states that both mean "von Helden umgeben."

47. Cf. ṚV.8.24.2ab. See also ṚV.6.20.1: *dyaúr ná yá indrābhí bhū́māryās tasthaú rayíḥ śávasā pṛtsú jánān, táṃ naḥ sahásrabharam urvarā́sā́ṃ daddhí sūno sahaso vṛtratúram*. "Like heaven over earth, O Indra, the wealth which stands over [that] of the stranger, with might [*śávas*] over the tribes in battles, give us that [wealth or might] which brings thousands [of cows], wins fertile fields, and surpasses Vṛtra/obstacles, O son of dominating strength." Cf. ṚV.6.20.7ab and ṚV.1.56.3. See also ṚV.6.17.1: *píbā sómam abhí yám ugra tárda ūrváṃ gávyam máhi gṛṇānā́ indra, ví yó dhṛṣṇo vádhiṣo vajrahasta víśvā vṛtrám amitríyā śávobhiḥ*. "Drink *sóma*! O powerful one, you will pierce through that which is the great cattle stall, as you are sung to, O Indra. O daring one with mace in hand, you who will strike away all, Vṛtra and those not in alliance, through [your] manifold might." Cf. ṚV.10.120.6c.

48. Cf. ṚV.7.48.2, to the Ṛbhus: *ṛbhúr ṛbhúbhir abhí vaḥ syāma víbhvo vibhúbhiḥ śávasā śávāṃsi, vā́jo asmā́ṁ avatu vā́jasātāv índreṇa yujā́ taruṣema vṛtrám*. "A craftsman

with craftsmen, potent ones with potent ones, through the might of you all, we would be superior to [their] manifold might. Let the prize help us in the winning of prizes, may we surpass Vṛtra with Indra as our yokemate." At ṚV.1.62.9ab, Indra upholds partnership (*sakhyá*) due to his *śávas*. In contrast, see ṚV.8.68.8: *ná yásya te śavasāna sakhyám ānáṃśa mártyaḥ, nákiḥ śávāṃsi te naśat*. "O you who acts with might [or are swelling], of whom no mortal has obtained your partnership, none will obtain your manifold might."

49. Cf. ṚV.6.68.3cd: *vájreṇānyáḥ śávasā hánti vṛtráṃ síṣakty anyó vṛjáneṣu víprah*. "One [Indra] smashes Vṛtra with his mace due to [his] might. The other [Varuṇa] accompanies [us] in the enclosures as one inspired."

50. Cf. ṚV.1.61.10: *asyéd evá śávasā śuṣántaṃ ví vṛścad vájreṇa vṛtrám índraḥ, gā́ná vrāṇā́ avánīr amuñcad abhí śrávo dāváne sácetāḥ*. "Just this one here: through [his] might Indra hewed apart hissing Vṛtra with his mace. He released the tributaries toward fame, like the enclosed cows, being very attentive to giving." The syntactic proximity of *śávasā* in this stanza suggests that it qualifies *śuṣántam* ("hissing"). However, this would be the only example in which Vṛtra possesses *śávas*. It more likely qualifies Indra, and its appearance in the first line simply maintains the dual alliteration across the hemistich. Cf. Geldner (1951, 1: 79). A late poet states that Indra should be generous in the same way he defeats Vṛtra and frees the waters. ṚV.1.57.1cd: *apā́m iva pravaṇé yásya durdhárāṃ rā́dho viśvā́yu śávase ápāvṛtam*. "Like at the torrent of the waters, [he is the one] whose generosity is difficult to contain, [whose generosity] is opened up throughout all [our] lifetime for might." Cf. ṚV.2.24.14.

51. Cf. ṚV.8.12.27: *yadā́ te víṣṇur ójasā tríṇi padā́ vicakramé, ā́d ít te haryatā́ hárī vavakṣatuḥ*. "When Viṣṇu strode out his three steps through [your] power [*ójas*], then surely your two desirable bay horses were strengthened."

52. For √*śū/śav*, see Mayrhofer EWA 2: 623–624.

53. See ṚV.1.54.7a, ṚV.2.25.1b, and ṚV.4.16.13a.

54. ṚV.6.19.7–9.

55. ṚV.1.64.15c, ṚV.8.31.3b, and ṚV.10.47.4b. Cf. ṚV.4.27.2cd, in which "Plenitude" (*púraṃdhi* = *sóma*) is swollen and surpasses (√*tṝ*) the wind. Cf. also ṚV.1.166.14.

56. ṚV.7.32.6.

57. Cf. Geldner 1951, 3: 173: "Das Kalb wird auf den Stier losgehen, wann es sich stark fühlt."

58. For *áṣāḷha* and *śávas*, see ṚV.10.48.11cd. For *ásāmi*, *ójas*, and *śávas*, see ṚV.1.39.10ab. Cf. ṚV.5.52.5b (*náro ásāmiśavasaḥ*), and ṚV.10.22.2d–3ab.

59. Insler (1968: 17) argues that the form *śávasāná* means "acting with *śávas*" and is related in meaning to the instrumental form *śávasā* (which appears in this stanza). It is formed through analogy with *sahasāná/sáhasā*; the former member (*sahasāná*) was originally a metathesized perfect participle. For other appearances of *śavasāná*, which exclusively qualifies Indra, see ṚV.1.62.1a, 2b, 13c, ṚV.6.37.3a, ṚV.8.2.22b, ṚV.8.46.6b, ṚV.8.68.8a, and ṚV.10.99.9a.

60. For *śávas* and √*vṛdh*, see also ṚV.1.81.4b and ṚV.10.23.5d.

61. ṚV.7.99.2b.

62. ṚV.1.52.14ab.

63. ṚV.3.61.4d: *ántād diváḥ papratha á pṛthivyáḥ*. Note ṚV.4.50.1a, which states that Bṛhaspati is the one "who propped apart the ends of the earth through [his] dominating strength" (*yás tastámbha sáhasā ví jmó ántān*).

64. ṚV.1.164.34a, 35a.

65. ṚV.10.114.10a.

66. For an obscure reference to *śávas*, *sūrí*, and a buffalo, see ṚV.1.141.3ab.

67. Cf. ṚV.7.74.6: *prá yé yayúr avṛkáso ráthā iva nṛpātáro jánānām, utá svéna śávasā śūśuvur nára utá kṣiyanti sukṣitím*. "These are the man-protectors of the tribes who traveled forth, bringing freedom from the wolves, as if chariots, and these men have been swollen with their own might and they dwell in a good dwelling." In the preceding stanza, the men are identified as munificent patrons.

68. At ṚV.1.51.10ab, after Uśanā fashions *sáhas* ("dominating strength") for Indra at his birth by means of *sáhas*, the war god's *śávas* drives apart (*ví √bādh*) heaven and earth through his greatness (*majmán*). For *sáhas* and *√bādh*, see ṚV.6.5.6ab and ṚV.6.6.6c. At ṚV.8.45.5a and ṚV.8.77.2a, Indra's mother, possibly Earth, is called *śavasín*, which perhaps signifies her expansive size. On this interpretation, see Oberlies 1998: 266. For Indra's birth and *śávas*, cf. ṚV.8.62.10. At ṚV.7.28.2, Indra is called *śavasín* and great (*mahimán*). At ṚV.10.120.9cd, sisters become Indra's mothers and cause him to grow (*√vṛdh*) in *śávas*. On the identity of the sisters, see Geldner 1951, 3: 347.

69. ṚV.1.80.13: *yád vṛtráṃ táva cāśániṃ vájreṇa samáyodhayaḥ, áhim indra jíghāṃsato diví te badbadhe śávó 'rcann ánu svarājyam*. "When, with [your] mace, you made Vṛtra and your missile clash against each other, O Indra, the might of you, as the one striving to smash the serpent, repeatedly pressed [Vṛtra apart] in heaven. They exalt [your] sovereignty." On this stanza, see Geldner 1951, 1: 103 and Witzel and Gotō 2007: 143. In an inverse image, see ṚV.1.52.10, in which Vṛtra presses down (*√bādh*) the world halves.

70. At ṚV.1.100.14ab, poets metaphorically equate their ritual recitation (*ukthá*) with an "inexhaustible measure" (*ájasra mā́na*) that, through Indra's *śávas*, bends around the world halves (*ródasī*) from all sides. For *ukthá* and *śávas*, see also ṚV.8.2.30 and ṚV.10.100.5a. Cf. ṚV.8.24.17 and ṚV.10.23.5cd.

71. For *ójas* and *áṃhas*, see ṚV.5.31.13.

72. Cf. ṚV.8.88.4 and ṚV.8.97.9.

73. This would also explain why one family book poet at ṚV.5.15.5 places a limit (*ánta*) on Agni's *śávas*, in the context of winning a horse race or cattle in a competition as no one wants an out of control inferno. Cf. Geldner 1951, 2: 16.

74. ṚV.1.8.5c: *dyaúr ná prathinā́ śávaḥ*. This line also appears at ṚV.8.56.1c.

75. At ṚV.1.52.11, since the earth is tenfold, the communities (*kṛṣṭí-*) spread out (*√tan*) through the days, and Indra's widely renowned, dominating strength (*víśrutaṃ sáhas*) equals heaven on account of his *śávas* and loftiness (*barháṇā*).

76. At ṚV.2.24.11, Indra's priestly alter ego, Bṛhaspati, is strengthened (*√ukṣ/vakṣ*) with *śávas*, whereby the god is able to spread widely (*pṛthú* + *√prath*) over the other gods and encompass (*pári √bhū*) all things.

77. The term *evayámarut* is problematic. It appears to be used as a refrain throughout this hymn, and in the first stanza it seems to qualify Viṣṇu. See Geldner 1951, 2: 90.

78. At ṚV.6.66.6ab, the powerful (*ugrá-*) Maruts yoke (√*yuj*) the well-fastened world halves (*ródasī suméke*) through their *śávas*. The Maruts are said to possess "real or true *śávas*" (*satyáśavas*) at ṚV.1.86.8b, 9a and ṚV.5.52.8b. For the Maruts and *śávas*, see also ṚV.5.87.1–2 and ṚV.7.57.1ab.

79. Cf. ṚV.10.73.8cd, to Indra: *ánu tvā devā́ḥ śávasā madanty upáribudhnān vanínaś cakartha*. "The gods applaud you due to [your] might. You made the trees [grow] upward from their roots." At ṚV.4.19.4, Indra makes the earth shake to its depths through his *śávas*.

80. At ṚV.10.111.6ab, Vṛtra is in a swollen state (*śū́śuvāna-*). At ṚV.3.30.8c, Vṛtra is growing (*várdhamāna-*). At ṚV.4.32.3b, he is either growing or full of pride (*vṛ́dhant*). Cf. ṚV.10.93.1, where heaven and earth are instructed to become "greatly wide" (*máhi . . . urvī́*) to protect worshippers from an overpowering foe (*sáhyaṃs*) who appears to be swelling (inf. *śū́ṣáṇi*).

CHAPTER 4

1. Outside of compounds, *ójas* appears a total of 168 times in the *Ṛgveda*. Its usage relates to Indra about 65 percent of the time (including five times Bṛhaspati and four times Indra and Varuṇa), Maruts 11 percent, Soma 9 percent, Viśve Devāḥ/Ādityas 3 percent (five times), Agni 2 percent (four times). In 10 percent of occurrences, it relates to other gods (Savitṛ, Sūrya, Heaven and Earth, Wind), a human (Purūruvas), Śuṣṇa/barbarians (involving Indra's destruction thereof), and other phenomena (wood, drum, river, body, *manyú*). The Indo-European heritage of *ójas* points to the proto-form **h₂éu̯g-es-*, and its adjectival form is *ugrá* (**h₂ug-ró-*). Cf. Avestan *aogō*, *aoǰah*; Latin *augur*, *augustus*; English august, augment. For detailed discussion of *ójas* and *ugrá*, see Gonda (1952; 1957); for an etymological survey, see Mayrhofer (EWA 1: 278; 2: 485–486); for √*ukṣ/vakṣ*, see Kiehnle (1979) and Jamison (1983: 165f.).

2. See, e.g., ṚV.1.135.9, ṚV.2.36.5, ṚV.5.57.6, ṚV.8.20.6, ṚV.8.93.2, ṚV.8.96.3, and ṚV.10.111.6. The etymologically related term *vákṣas* also highlights the bodily connection as it means "chest, breast."

3. ṚV.2.25.4c, ṚV.4.32.3ab, and ṚV.10.103.6.

4. ṚV.8.97.14ab, ṚV.1.55.6; ṚV.1.53.7b; and ṚV.8.33.7cd, respectively.

5. ṚV.1.80.2c and ṚV.1.80.11c.

6. ṚV.8.4.5b. Cf. ṚV.10.84.2, where *manyú* pushes away (*ví* √*nud*) rivals while showing the measure of its *ójas*.

7. ṚV.7.82.3a.

8. ṚV.1.85.10.

9. ṚV.9.34.1c and ṚV.9.108.6b.

10. ṚV.1.187.1.

11. ṚV.2.29.2ab. At ṚV.1.188.4, the Ādityas scatter sacred grass over the ritual ground with *ójas*.

12. ṚV.10.65.4 and 7. Cf. ṚV.8.51.8.

13. This is evident in the regular appearance of *ójas* in the instrumental case, which can express the means by which an action is achieved ("with, by, through X") or

can function as a marker of cause, reason, and motive ("through, by reasons of, due to X"). See Speijer (1998 [1886]: 48–52). Cf. Wackernagel (AIG II, 2: 230), who takes *ójasā* as an adverb.

14. The two terms are near synonyms. See, e.g., ṚV.6.19.6ab, which depicts Indra as being told to bring "the mightiest might [*śáviṣṭha śávas*], the most powerful power [*ójiṣṭha ójas*] that is powerful [*ugrá*]." Cf. ṚV.1.84.9c, ṚV.5.20.2b, ṚV.7.56.7a, ṚV.8.4.10d, and ṚV.10.83.1, 4. However, they are not identical in use and function. For example, *ójas* appears only twice with the term *śū́ra* (ṚV.1.132.5 and ṚV.2.17.2), while *śávas* appears infrequently with *sóma*. See ṚV.1.81.8ab, ṚV.6.43.4, ṚV.6.44.3, and ṚV.10.116.1. Cf. ṚV.1.52.10.

15. For discussion of this cosmogony, see Kuiper 1983 and Horsch 2004.

16. For √*piś/peś*, see Mayrhofer EWA 2: 168–169. At ṚV.1.161.10b, a craftsman (*ṛbhú*) cuts (√*piś*) flesh or meat (*māṃsá*). Cf. ṚV.4.33.4b and ṚV.1.110.8a. At ṚV.3.60.2a, craftsmen engrave (√*piś*) ritual cups (*camasá-*). Cf. ṚV.1.161.9d. At ṚV.2.33.9b, Rudra adorned himself with bright golden flecks (*śukrébhiḥ pipiśe híraṇyaiḥ*). At ṚV.5.56.1b, the Maruts are adorned with shining ornaments (*piṣṭáṃ rukmébhir añjíbhiḥ*). Cf. ṚV.1.64.8b, ṚV.5.60.4b, and ṚV.7.57.3. At ṚV.1.68.10b, Fire adorned heaven's vault with stars (*pipéśa nā́kam stṛ́bhir*). See also ṚV.6.49.3b, ṚV.10.68.11b, and ṚV.10.127.7a. See Watkins 2000: 62 for the Indo-European root **peig/peiḱ*, which can mean "to cut, mark (by incision); to embroider, tattoo," and from which, via a nasalized zero-grade form **ping* (Latin *pingere*), we get words like "paint, picture" and "pigment."

17. At ṚV.1.135.9, the wind's young bulls (*ukṣán-*) are said to possess *bāhvòjas*. They are most likely the Maruts since at ṚV.1.64.2a the Maruts are explicitly called *ukṣán*. The term *ukṣán* derives from √*ukṣ/vakṣ*, and, according to Kiehnle (1979: 118), designates a steer three to five years old.

18. Cf. ṚV.4.27.2ab, where *tvákṣas* and *vīryà* are juxtaposed.

19. I follow Geldner's (1951, 2: 417) translation of *bāhvòjas* here. Oldenberg (1912: 144) notes that since it is used as a possessive compound in all other appearances, it may here qualify Indra's *vájra*, which is absent because of ellipsis: "the strong-armed [mace]".

20. See also ṚV.8.6.5: *ójas tád asya titviṣa ubhé yád samávartayat, índraś cármeva ródasī*. "This power of his flared awesomely when Indra folded both world halves together, like a hide." And ṚV.8.12.24: *ná yáṃ viviktó ródasī nā́ntárikṣāṇi vajríṇam, ámād íd asya titviṣe sám ójasaḥ*. "Neither the two worlds nor the atmospheres encompass the one who wields the mace. Because of his onslaught surely all that flared awesomely in unison, because of [his] power."

21. Note the first line of the next stanza, ṚV.1.52.13a: *tvám bhuvaḥ pratimā́nam pṛthivyā́*. "You will become the counterpart of the earth."

22. For *abhíbhūtyojas*, see ṚV.1.52.7d, ṚV.3.34.6d, ṚV.3.48.4a, ṚV.4.42.5d, ṚV.6.18.1a, and ṚV.10.83.4a. See also ṚV.4.41.4: *índrā yuváṃ varuṇā́ didyúm asminn ójiṣṭham ugrā ní vadhiṣṭaṃ vájram, yó no durévo vṛ́kátir dabhítis tásmin mimāthām abhíbhūty ójaḥ*. "O powerful Indra and Varuṇa, you struck down [your] missile, [your] most powerful [*ójiṣṭha*] mace upon him, the deceptive and wolfish one, who is ill disposed to us. Against him, show the measure of [your] power [*ójas*] that entails supremacy."

23. ṚV.1.102.8: *triviṣṭidhātu pratimānam ójasas tisró bhūmīr nṛpate tríṇi rocaná, átīdāṃ víśvam bhúvanaṃ vavakṣithāśatrúr indra janúṣā sanād asi.* "The counterpart of [your] power has threefold divisions; the three earths, O lord of men, the three luminosities. You have been empowered beyond this entire living world, O Indra; you lack an enemy, due to [your] birth from of old."

24. In my interpretation of line c, I follow Jamison (pers. comm., March 2003), who suggests comparing it with ṚV.2.12.9c (cited above). In addition, while the *padapāṭha* has *akalpáḥ*, she justifiably interprets the case as a locative singular **akalpé*. Cf. Geldner (1951, 1: 132), who translates line c as "Durch seine Stärke macht Indra ein Gegengewicht unmöglich." See also Oldenberg 1909: 98. Cf. ṚV.8.96.17, where Śuṣṇa's *ójas* "lacks a counterpart" (*apratimāná*), even though Indra is able to smash (√*han*) it. The poet's hyperbole works to highlight the irony that Indra's power is greater than even Śuṣṇa's unmatchable state.

25. As Indra's loyal band of warriors, the Maruts also exercise their physical power over cosmological and natural phenomena. See, e.g., ṚV.1.19.8, ṚV.5.59.7, and ṚV.8.7.8.

26. See ṚV.2.17.2, ṚV.4.41.4, ṚV.5.31.7, and ṚV.7.82.6. Cf. ṚV.10.84.2 (to *manyú*). See also ṚV.5.55.2.

27. Cf. ṚV.1.7.8 and ṚV.8.62.2.

28. Note the political image in relation to god Sun's light at ṚV.10.170.3: *idáṃ śréṣṭhaṃ jyótiṣāṃ jyótir uttamáṃ viśvajid dhanajíd ucyate bṛhát, viśvabhrāḍ bhrājó máhi sū́ryo dṛśá urú paprathe sáha ójo ácyutam.* "This is the most glorious, highest light of lights, the lofty one is called all-winning, stakes-winning. Blazing over all, the great blazing Sun spread his wide dominating strength, his unshakeable power, in order to be seen."

29. Grassmann (1996 [1873]: 1624) translates *svádhiti* as "Axt, die himmlische Axt." The translation "divine axe" simply makes no sense here. I follow Geldner (1951, 2: 31), who agrees with Sāyaṇa that *svádhiti* is from *svadhā́*.

30. Cf. ṚV.8.97.14: *tvám púra indra cikíd enā vy ójasā śaviṣṭha śakra nāśayádhyai, tvád víśvāni bhúvanāni vajrin dyā́vā rejete pṛthiví ca bhiṣā́.* "O Indra, you perceive how to obliterate these forts through [your] power, O mightiest capable one. O mace wielder, all the living worlds tremble before you, both heaven and earth tremble with fear." For a further statement of Indra's fearful state, see ṚV.10.54.1 (where the two worlds fear Indra, as he extends the gods' *ójas* to defeat the Dāsa). A similar characteristic is ascribed to Indra's loyal henchmen at ṚV.7.58.2.

31. See Geldner (1951, 2: 31). Cf. ṚV.4.17.2. At ṚV.8.6.27, the clans (*víś-*) call on Indra for help because drinking *sóma* has made him the "wide expanse, reach" (*urujráyas*).

32. ṚV.6.8.6b: *ánāmi kṣatrám ajáraṃ suvíryam.* "Unbending dominion, undecaying man-power." For *kṣatrá*, see Schlerath (1960: 114–131), who supplies "Herrschaft."

33. For plural *śámbara-* as "fortifications," see Parpola 1997: 196. Cf. ṚV.1.130.7.

34. For *ójas* and *manyú*, see ṚV.8.4.5, ṚV.10.83.1, 4, ṚV.10.73.10, and ṚV.10.84.2.

35. Note the political metaphor at ṚV.3.36.4: *mahā́ṁ ámatro vṛjáne virapśy ùgráṃ śávaḥ patyate dhṛṣṇv ójaḥ, nā́ha vivyāca pṛthiví canaínaṃ yát sómāso háryaśvam*

ámandan. "Great, impetuous, overflowing in the [sacrificial] enclosure, he is lord of powerful might, bold power. The earth never enveloped him, when the *sóma* drinks exhilarated the one who owns bay horses." For similar use of √*pat*, cf. ṚV.1.84.9 and ṚV.10.23.2. For *virapśín*, cf. ṚV.8.76.5b: "the one overflowed (from *sóma*) is full of power" (*ójasvantaṃ virapśínam*). Cf. ṚV.10.113.6.

36. See ṚV.1.188.4, ṚV.5.55.2, and ṚV.9.5.3. For *ví* √*rāj*, see Gotō (1987: 267ff.). Cf. also ṚV.3.45.5 (*svarā́j*), ṚV.7.82.2 (*samrā́j*, *svarā́j*), and ṚV.8.61.2 (*svarā́j*).

37. ṚV.8.97.11: *sám īṃ rebhā́so asvarann índraṃ sómasya pītáye, svàrpatiṃ yád īṃ vṛdhé dhṛtávrato hy ójasā sám ūtíbhiḥ*. "The Rebhas sounded out in unison to him, to Indra to drink of *sóma*, since [they sounded out] to strengthen him, the lord of the sun. For the one whose commandments are upheld is associated with power, with favors."

38. ṚV.6.18.15ab.

39. ṚV.7.82.9. Monier-Williams (1988 [1899]: 306) and Grassmann (1996 [1873]: 349) supply "overpowering men; Menschen überwältigend," while Geldner (1951, 2: 82) translates *kṛṣṭyojas-* as "in whom the strength of the folk resides." Cf. Klein 1985, 2: 110.

40. The basic elements of the idiom also appear at ṚV.1.165.10.

41. See also ṚV.1.175.4ab. Cf. ṚV.8.40.5e: *índra íśāna ójasā*. "Indra acts as master due to [his] power." ṚV.8.76.1: *imáṃ nú māyínaṃ huva índram íśānam ójasā, marútvantaṃ ná vṛñjáse*. "Now I invoke Indra here, the crafty one, acting as master due to [his] power, accompanied by the Maruts, as if to twist [him here]." Cf. ṚV.1.7.8: *vṛ́ṣā yūthéva váṃsagaḥ kṛṣṭír iyarty ójasā, íśāno ápratiṣkutaḥ*. "Like a buffalo his herds, the bull [Indra] promotes the communities through [his] power, acting as the master who cannot be driven back." For a related metaphor of control, see also ṚV.2.25.3: *síndhur ná kṣódaḥ śímīvāṁ̐ rghāyató vṛ́ṣeva vádhrīṁr abhí vaṣṭy ójasā, agnér iva prásitir nā́ha vártave yáṃyaṃ yújaṃ kṛṇuté bráhmaṇas pátiḥ*. "Energetic, like a surging river, he asserts his will over the ballsy ones through [his] power, like a bull over the castrated steers. Whomever the lord of the sacred formulation makes a yokemate, like the onslaught of Fire, he can never be turned back."

42. I follow Geldner (1951, 2: 344), who compares the appearance of *sthirá* with ṚV.4.4.5, ṚV.10.120.4, ṚV.10.134.2, and ṚV.10.116.5, which suggest the stretching of a "firm object," possibly a bow. The term *máhi* could also be an adverb.

43. Gonda (1989: 30–31, 36–38, 59, 122) concludes that *ójas* means "authority." In typical fashion, he also states that *ójas* denotes the "prestige or authority emanating from [Indra's] creative energy" or simply "creative authority" (5, 147, 162–163, 199). He holds that *ugrá* means "power, authoritative, energetically powerful" (49, 144, 160) and that the superlative *ójiṣṭha* means "most authoritative-and-effective" or "most impressive, powerful, prominent" (20, 71).

44. In several cases the verb √*dhā* ("to establish, set, place") signals this process as the Maruts place *ójas* on Indra, and in a similar fashion *ójas* is placed on them. See ṚV.3.47.3d and ṚV.5.57.6b. At ṚV.10.44.4c, Indra is commanded to "make power, seize it altogether unto yourself" (*ójaḥ kṛṣva sáṃ gṛbhāya tvé ápy*).

45. Cf. ṚV.7.99.1ab, to Viṣṇu: *paró mā́trayā tanvà vṛdhāna ná te mahitvám ánv aśnuvanti*. "O you grown in body beyond measure, they cannot reach your greatness."

46. See, e.g., ṚV.1.55.6: *sá hí śravasyúḥ sádanāni kṛtrímā kṣmayā́ vṛdhāná ójasā vināśáyan, jyótīṃṣi kṛṇvánn avṛkā́ṇi yájyavé 'va sukrátuḥ sártavā́ apáḥ sṛjat*. "For, in

seeking fame, he, being strengthened on the earth with power is destroying artfully made locations. Making the lights free of wolves for the worshipful one, with good resolve he released the waters to flow." For the significance of the wolf (*vṛ́ka*), see Parpola (1997: 195–196), whose suggests that the term may refer to the name of an enemy of early Āryans.

47. See Kiehnle (1979: 26–29, 34–40) for an insightful study of the verb √*ukṣ*/*vakṣ* (and √*ukṣ* "to sprinkle"). For Kiehnle (1979: 34), the use of this verb in relation to Indra is typically a poetic extension of Fire's increase with offerings. Cf. ṚV.5.48.2a, in which the Dawns provide "empowerment to brave men" (*vīrávakṣaṇa*-).

48. The verbs √ *ukṣ*/*vakṣ* and √*vṛdh* repeatedly appear throughout ṚV.8.12.1–33.

49. Cf. ṚV.1.19.4: *yá ugrā́ arkám ānṛcúr ánādhṛṣṭāsa ójasā, marúdbhir agna ā́ gahi*. "These powerful ones, who chanted the chant, none dare to approach due to [their] power: O Fire, come with the Maruts!" At ṚV.3.32.3b, the Maruts offer ritual chants (√*arc*) to Indra's *ójas*. Cf. ṚV.1.132.5de.

50. Cf. ṚV.5.33.6: *paprkṣéṇyam indra tvé hy ójo nṛmṇā́ni ca nṛtámāno ámartaḥ, sá na énīṃ vasavāno rayíṃ dāḥ prā́ryā́ stuṣe tuvimaghásya dā́nam*. "Indeed, O Indra, the power [conferred] on you is to be encouraged, and your manly acts [or qualities]. As the dancing immortal, give us colorful wealth, you winner of treasures. I praise forth the gift of the vigorously munificent compatriot." For the problematic hapax *paprkṣéṇya*, see Mayrhofer EWA12: 159.

51. This image is at the heart of ṚV.10.119.1–13, a passage in which the poet details his massive growth beyond the universe from drinking *sóma*. Interestingly, the poet's name is "Laba Aindra," which suggests that he acts like a bird in the same vein as Indra; that is, he seeks to fly to heaven through drinking *sóma*. In stanza 11, his size is so great that his two wings touch heaven and earth. For *labá* as some kind of bird, see Mayrhofer EWA2: 474.

52. The power terms *ugrá*, *sáhas*, *bála*, and *ójas* appear several stanzas later at ṚV.10.116.5–6. On *indriyá*, see Whitaker (forthcoming). For the synonymy of such terms, see also ṚV.4.17.3: *bhinád girím śávasā vájram iṣṇánn āviṣkṛṇvānáḥ sahasānā́ ójaḥ, vádhīd vṛtráṃ vájreṇa mandasānáḥ sárann ā́po jávasā hatávṛṣṇīḥ*. "Hurling his mace, he split the mountain through [his] might [*śávas*], displaying, as he acts with dominating strength [*sahasānā́*], [his] power [*ójas*]. He, being elated, slew Vṛtra with his mace. The waters flowed with speed, they whose bull was smashed." For *sahasānā́*, see Insler 1968: 10ff.

53. ṚV.8.92.17c. Cf. ṚV.8.3.24b, in which the anointing of a meal or food (*pitú*) is called the "giver of power" (*ojodā́*-). And ṚV.1.187.1: *pitúṃ nú stoṣam mahó dharmā́ṇaṃ táviṣīm, yásya tritó vy ójasā vṛtráṃ víparvam ardáyat*. "Now I praise the meal, the sustainer, the vigor of the great one, through whose power Trita [Indra] shook apart the serpent joint from joint." Cf. ṚV.2.22.4f. For Trita, see also ṚV.10.99.6cd: *asyá tritó nv ójasā vṛdhānó vipā́ varāhám áyoagrayā han*. "Trita, being strengthened now with his power, smashed the boar with [his] iron-pointed inspiration."

54. Cf. ṚV.8.51.8: *prá yó nanakṣé abhy ójasā krívim vadhaíḥ śúṣṇaṃ nighoṣáyan, yadéd ástambhīt pratháyann amū́ṃ dívam ā́d íj janiṣṭa pā́rthivaḥ*. "The one who came into contact with Krivi-snake due to [his] power, [while] silencing Śuṣṇa with his deadly weapons, when surely he propped up yonder heaven as he spread it out, therein the realm of earth was born."

55. See also ṚV.1.55.5: *sá ín mahắni samithắni majmánā kṛṇóti yudhmá ójasā jánebhyaḥ, ádhā caná śrád dadhati tvíṣīmata índrāya vájraṃ nighánighnate vadhám*. "This one surely makes great contests due to [his] greatness; he is a fighter for the tribes due to [his] power. And then, they place their trust in the fiery Indra [when] he repeatedly smashed down [his] mace, that deadly weapon."

56. Poets extend the metaphor to the god Soma himself, who acts violently because of his own strength. See, e.g., ṚV.9.34.1: *prá suvānó dhắrayā tánéndur hinvānó arṣati, rujád dṛḷhắ vy ójasā*. "The droplet, being pressed and urged on, rushes forth in a continuous stream, rending asunder sturdy [things or forts] with power." Cf. stanzas from various Pavamāna hymns of book 9 in which *sóma* possesses *ójas*, i.e., ṚV.9.5.3, ṚV.9.29.1, ṚV.9.35.2, ṚV.9.39.3, ṚV.9.53.2, ṚV.9.65.10, 14, and ṚV.9.106.7.

57. See ṚV.2.36.1, ṚV.3.35.8, ṚV.6.40.2, ṚV.9.11.1, ṚV.9.17.7, ṚV.9.24.3, ṚV.9.27.3, ṚV.9.28.1, ṚV.9.62.5, 16, ṚV.9.68.4, 7, ṚV.9.72.2, ṚV.9.74.4, ṚV.9.75.3, 5, ṚV.9.78.2, ṚV.9.80.4, ṚV.9.86.20, 22, 34, ṚV.9.87.1, ṚV.9.91.2, ṚV.9.95.1, ṚV.9.97.5, ṚV.9.101.3, ṚV.9.107.5, 16, ṚV.9.108.15, and ṚV.9.109.8, 15, 18. Cf. ṚV.9.56.4, where *sóma* protects men.

58. Cf. ṚV.9.48.1, to Soma: *táṃ tvā nṛmṇắni bíbhrataṃ sadhástheṣu mahó diváḥ, cắruṃ sukṛtyáyemahe*. "Thus for that which is precious we implore with good activity you, who brings manly qualities among the abodes of great heaven."

59. Cf. ṚV.6.30.1ab: *bhū́ya íd vāvṛdhe vīryàyaṁ́ éko ajuryó dayate vásūni*. "Still more greatly he has been strengthened for manliness. This unaging one alone gives treasures." ṚV.9.113.1: *śaryaṇắvati sómam índraḥ pibatu vṛtrahắ, bálaṃ dádhāna ātmáni kariṣyán vīryàm mahád índrāyendo pári srava*. "Let Indra, the smasher of Vṛtra, drink *sóma* on the reedy pond. Establishing strength in himself he will perform a great manly act: O droplet, flow around for Indra."

60. ṚV.8.45.26: *ápibat kadrúvaḥ sutám índraḥ sahásrabāhve, átrādediṣṭa paúṃsyam*. Cf. ṚV.8.93.15b: *vṛtrahắdiṣṭa paúṃsyam*. At ṚV.1.101.3a, Heaven and Earth most likely strengthen (√*vṛdh*) Indra's great masculinity (*paúṃsyam mahád*). For further instances of √*vṛdh* and *paúṃsya*, see ṚV.1.155.3a and ṚV.8.6.31b. See also ṚV.2.13.10a: "all obstructions" (*víśvā rodhanā́*) forfeit *paúṃsya* to Indra. Cf. also ṚV.6.66.2: *yé agnáyo ná śóśucann idhānā́ dvír yát trír marúto vāvṛdhánta, areṇávo hiraṇyáyāsa eṣāṃ sākáṃ nṛmṇaíḥ paúṃsyebhiś ca bhūvan*. "Those who kept repeatedly blazing like fires being kindled, when the Maruts were strengthened twice or three times; dustless, what belongs to them is golden. They came into being simultaneously with their manly powers and masculine qualities."

61. ṚV.9.62.23: *abhí gávyāni vītáye nṛmṇā́ punānó arṣasi, sanádvājaḥ pári srava*. "For the pursuit of cattle, being purified, you rush out to manly acts. Flow about, as you win prizes." Cf. ṚV.9.15.4, to Soma: *eṣá śṛ́ṅgāṇi dódhuvac chíśīte yūthyò vṛ́ṣā, nṛmṇā́ dádhāna ójasā*. "This one, the bull [who leads] the herd, shaking his horns violently, sharpens them, assuming manly qualities [or manly powers] due to [his] power." And ṚV.9.69.3d: *nṛmṇā́ śíśāno mahiṣó ná śobhate*. "Honing his manly qualities, like a great buffalo, he beautifies himself."

62. Geldner (1951, 2: 284) says the adjective *jyéṣṭha* should qualify a drink. I note, however, that it qualifies *śávas* at ṚV.6.48.21e and *sáhas* at ṚV.1.84.5d and ṚV.8.4.4d.

63. For *tuvinṛmṇá*, see also ṚV.4.22.6a, ṚV.6.46.3c, ṚV.8.24.27c, ṚV.8.70.10c, ṚV.10.61.3c, and ṚV.10.148.1b.

64. Cf. ṚV.9.101.15ab: *sá vīró dakṣasā́dhano ví yás tastámbha ródasī*. "He [Soma] is a brave man, the accomplishment of [sacrificial] skill, who propped apart the world halves." Cf. ṚV.1.86.4a, in a hymn to the Maruts, where *sóma* is pressed on the sacred grass of the brave man, i.e., Indra.

65. For a similar opinion, see Scharfe 1992. See also ṚV.1.108.5: *yā́nindrāgnī cakráthur vīryā̀ṇi yā́ni rūpā́ṇy utá vṛ́ṣṇyāni, yā́ vām pratnā́ni sakhyā́ śivā́ni tébhiḥ sómasya pibataṃ sutásya*. "O Indra and Fire, the manly acts that you have performed, and those that took the form of bullish acts, the ancient favorable partnerships that belong to you two; because of these, drink of the pressed *sóma*."

66. Cf. Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987: 25): "In addition to controlling bodies in a time of crisis, societies regularly reproduce and socialize the kind of bodies that they need. Aggressive (or threatened) societies, for example, often require fierce and foolhardy warriors."

67. For the identity of *sóma* as ephedra, see Nyberg 1995. For a summary of past interpretations and current issues pertaining to *sóma*, see Staal 2001, Nicholson 2002, and Houben 2003. Oberlies (1998: 141–331, esp. 141–167) also provides a detailed survey of past interpretations of *sóma*, and its place in Ṛgvedic ritual culture.

68. We also need to consider the way in which poet-priests map their own physical exertion onto *sóma*. See, e.g., ṚV.3.51.10: *idáṃ hy ánv ójasā sutáṃ rādhānām pate, píbā tv àsyá girvaṇaḥ*. "Indeed, here [*sóma*] is pressed out in sequence with power, O lord of benefits: Drink of it! O coveter of songs." Cf. Oldenberg 1912: 252 and Geldner 1951, 1: 391. And ṚV.9.2.7: *gíras ta inda ójasā marmṛjyánte apasyúvaḥ, yā́bhir mádāya śúmbhase*. "O droplet, industrious songs are repeatedly groomed for you with power, whereby you are made beautiful for exhilaration."

69. See also ṚV.8.61.2: *táṃ hí svarā́jaṃ vṛ́ṣabhāṃ tám ójase dhiṣáṇe niṣṭatakṣátuḥ, utópamānām prathamó ní ṣīdasi sómakāmaṃ hí te mánaḥ*. "For the two Dhiṣaṇās [Heaven and Earth] fashioned him [Indra] out for power as ruler of his own [domain], as the bull; and you, foremost of the highest ones, sit down since your mind longs for *sóma*."

70. See, e.g., ṚV.1.102.8.

71. Cf. ṚV.2.17.2ab: *sá bhūtu yó ha prathamā́ya dhā́yasa ójo mímāno mahimā́nam ā́tirat*. "Let him indeed be one who is present for the foremost taking of nurture. Showing the measure of [his] power, he crossed over to greatness." The ritual act of drinking *sóma* is also compared with the nursing of an infant at ṚV.9.70.5 and ṚV.9.86.3, in which Soma is groomed and purified "for nursing belonging to Indra" or "Indriyan power" (*indriyā́ya dhā́yase*).

72. Cf. Oberlies 1998: 419–424.

73. ṚV.3.4.9 (= ṚV.7.2.9): *tán nas turípam ádha poṣayitnú déva tvaṣṭar ví rarāṇáḥ syasva, yáto vīráḥ karmaṇyàḥ sudákṣo yuktágrāvā jā́yate devákāmaḥ*. "And in a giving manner, god Tvaṣṭṛ, for us release this fertile semen, from which an active and highly skilled brave man is born, whose pressing stones are yoked up as one that loves the gods." Cf. ṚV.2.3.9b: *śruṣṭí vīró jā́yate devákāmaḥ*. "A brave man is born as one that loves the gods with obedience."

74. ṚV.1.91.20: *sómo dhenúṃ sómo árvantam āśúṃ sómo vīráṃ karmaṇyàṃ dadāti, sādanyàṃ vidathyàṃ sabhéyam pitṛśrávaṇaṃ yó dádāśad asmai*. "Soma [gives] a milch cow. Soma gives a swift race horse. Soma gives an active brave man, worthy of the seat, worthy of the distribution ceremony, worthy of the assembly, bringing fame to the fathers, who will perform ritual service to this one." Note also in the preceding stanza, ṚV.1.91.19, Soma is called *suvíra*, while not destroying warriors (*ávīrahan*).

75. ṚV.7.90.1-2; see esp. 2cd: *kṛṇóṣi tám mártyeṣu praśastáṃ jātó-jāto jāyate vājy àsya*. "You make him celebrated among mortals. Each one born of him is born a prizewinner." Cf. Geldner (1951, 2: 261). At ṚV.9.64.4, drinks of *sóma* seek cows, horses, and brave men (*gavyā́, aśvayā́, vīrayā́*).

76. At ṚV.9.97.44b, Soma is commanded to bring the *vīrá*, who is Indra, and a sacrificial portion (*bhága*).

77. ṚV.9.68.5a: *sáṃ dákṣeṇa mánasā jāyate kavíḥ-*.

78. ṚV.3.59.4ab: *ayám mitró namasyàḥ suśévo rā́jā sukṣatró ajaniṣṭa vedhā́ḥ*. "Worthy of worship and very favorable, Mitra has been born here as chieftain of good dominion and a ritual expert."

79. ṚV.10.61.16a: *ayáṃ stutó rā́jā vandi vedhā́ḥ-*.

80. See Heesterman 1957.

81. Cf. ṚV.6.29.6cd: *evā́ hí jātó ásamātyojāḥ purū́ ca vṛtrā́ hanati ní dásyūn*. "For thus he is born with extreme power that is unequalled [*ásamātyójas-*]. He will smash down many obstacles and barbarians." And also ṚV.1.130.9a-c: *sū́raś cakrám prá vṛhaj jātá ójasā prapitvé vā́cam aruṇó muṣāyatiśāná ā́ muṣāyati*. "The one who is born with power tore out the Sun's disc. At daybreak the tawny one steals speech; acting as master he steals it away."

82. Cf. ṚV.1.110.7a: *ṛbhúr na índraḥ śávasā návīyān*. "The Craftsman [has become] a newer Indra for us due to [his] might."

83. One poet even suggests that the production of *sóma* for gods depends on the physical well-being of the ritual practitioners themselves. ṚV.7.91.4: *yā́vat táras tanvò yā́vad ójo yā́van náraś cákṣasā dídhyānāḥ, śúciṃ sómaṃ śucipā pātam asmé índravāyū sádatam barhír édám*. "So long as there is endurance of the body, so long as there is its power, so long as men are contemplating with their sight: Drink bright *sóma* among us. O Indra and Vāyu, you drinkers of bright [*sóma*]: sit yourselves here on the sacred grass." Cf. ṚV.1.33.12: *ny àvidhyad ilibíśasya dṛḷhā́ ví śṛṅgíṇam abhinac chúṣṇam índraḥ, yā́vat táro maghavan yā́vad ójo vájreṇa śátrum avadhīḥ pṛtanyúm*. "Indra penetrated Ilībiśa's steadfast [forts], he split apart the horned Śuṣṇa. So long as there is endurance, O munificent one, so long as there is power, [therein] with your mace you have slain the rival whom desired battle."

84. Note ṚV.10.153.4c = ṚV.8.76.9c; and ṚV.10.153.5b = ṚV.8.62.2d. Cf. ṚV.8.97.9c: *víśvā jātā́ni śávasābhibhūr asi*.

CONCLUSION

1. See the use of plural *vívācaḥ* at ṚV.6.31.1 and ṚV.6.33.2.
2. See ṚV.3.34.10c and ṚV.10.23.5a.

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